



UK Launch of the Trade plus Aid® Design Studio

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The Trade plus Aid® Design Studio, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, is the latest project in a programme created to improve the conditions of marginalised and destitute people through sustainable craft projects. The Trade plus Aid® Design Studio has created ethical employment for women from some of the poorest areas of rural KwaZulu Natal, by designing and producing a range of unique glass handcrafted, kiln-fired windchimes.

These beautiful glass chimes are available in many colourful ornamental designs, including dolphins and angelfish for the wildlife lover, 1970s retro designs for the design conscious and striking *Ndebele* tribal motifs. Each design has its own evocative African name and history. Hang one in the garden and the glass will refract the summer sunshine and as the breeze moves through it, you will hear its delicate music. A must for *Feng Shui* enthusiasts. Each windchime is packaged in a trendy hand-printed box.



The project produces a range of hand crafted kiln fired glass windchimes, pendants and Christmas decorations. As the glass craft is a new development, the ladies working in the studio have had to receive intense training in all aspects of glass working. These ladies come from some of the poorest rural areas of South Africa so none have ever used electricity in their homes or had running water. Skills training therefore begins with the basic uses of electricity and its' safe use.

It took Trade plus Aid® Project Co-ordinators Matthew Hayden and Kevin Atkinson three years to perfect the process that makes the glass durable enough to withstand all weathers. In this time the project has progressed from the basement of Kevin's home to a large studio which now employs 20 women on a full-time basis and 15-20 on a part-time basis. Like so many in South Africa, these women have had to leave their homelands in KwaZulu Natal to seek work in the city. They had little or no money and ended up in the violent slum areas of townships such as Soweto, where rents are cheap but living conditions are dreadful. Now they have been trained in glass working and basic office skills, they enjoy fair working conditions and their salaries support a total of 480 family members back home; one of the women is responsible for no less than 17 people.



Matthew Hayden says, "Had it not been for the assistance of Charlotte di Vita MBE we would probably have had to close down, leaving our ladies out of work and stranded. All of us hope that we shall develop into a business competing in the world market which will mean we can offer long term, secure employment. Already these glass chimes have received significant acclaim in the USA, where the range is distributed by the respected wind chimes manufacturer Woodstock Chimes. The range was launched in the Discovery Channel stores and the National Geographic catalogue."

Charlotte di Vita MBE, founder of Trade plus Aid®, comments, "Our aim is to alleviate poverty in disadvantaged communities around the world through Fair Trade and since 1992 we have assisted communities in 12 countries to become self-sufficient. In addition to creating employment we have also re-invested surplus profits in aid schemes to help those who cannot be assisted through trade, such as children."



In South Africa we have already had the pleasure of facilitating two programmes: Jabulani (which means happiness in Zulu) is a self-help centre for destitute children and families in a squatter camp settlements in Marianhill, on the outskirts of Durban. The project focuses on providing basic needs, such as food, shelter and education. Trade plus Aid® has funded candle-making and carpentry equipment which enables Jabulani to produce goods for the local market, creating fairly-paid work for those people who rely on Jabulani for food. Recently we helped to provide a sea container for storage which was generously donated by the US corporation, Sea Containers America.



The other project works with street children. In fact Tennyson House is the only shelter and safe haven for homeless girls living on the street in Durban. Here Trade plus Aid® has assisted with the funding of a professional child-care social worker who works with the children and their families in order to effect a successful reconciliation.

Charlotte di Vita concludes, "Establishing our first design studio in Africa is quite a challenge. These products are a fusion of African and British style, symbolising a new beginning and a hopeful future."

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Trade plus Aid® has now raised \$347,200 to fund poverty alleviation projects in less developed countries around the world

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