

Local business bags success

GIVE a man a fish and he'll eat for a day, but teach him how to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime. This is exactly what Cape Town Patterns did when they started teaching women from the townships how to sew.

Cape Town Patterns, a company that markets and sells natural hessian and cotton bags, was founded by Nicole-Marie Iresch in 1997.

After witnessing the difficult situations women in the townships have to face daily, Iresch decided that she wanted to help them overcome this.

But she did not want to offer them charity, she wanted to empower them.

She started working with the women in the townships and taught them how to sew, and supplied them with equipment.

Then she encouraged the women to create their own cooperatives.

Today Cape Town Patterns works with three cooperatives, two from Khayelitsha and one from Manenberg.

The one cooperative in Khayelitsha is called Sophumelela and is run by 10 women.

The second one called Somila consists of five women.

The Manenberg Cooperative called Voorspoed is owned by six women.

Audrey Touchard of Cape Town Patterns says the products are inspired by day to day life in the townships and are marketed by Cape Town Patterns.

She says they have three different ranges of bags.

Corporate bags which they supply to different kinds of events, Fashion bags which they have supplied to Colette in Paris in 2008 and Gap in 2007 and Pick n Pay bags.

Seanne Kube, international trade manager: Wesgro, says they have also introduced Cape Town Patterns to the New York market where they secured an order with ABC Home Stores.

Other achievements include:

- Supplying 4 500 bags to the South African Medical Assistance in 2005.
- Supplying the World Diabetes Congress with 12 500 bags in 2006.
- Marketing their products at the Design Indaba, and in international trade shows.

Cape Town Patterns is a member of International Federation of Alternative Trade, Proudly South African, the French-South Africa Chamber of Commerce and the



The ladies of one of the Khayelitsha cooperatives with Township Patterns bags

Cape Chamber of Commerce.

Touchard says if the company needs more help or if a new cooperative needs to be created,

they organize recruitment sessions and then they train the new group until they are ready to build their own cooperative or to integrate into

a cooperative.

To be considered for a training session call Nwabisa Mayema on 021 422 4828/29.