



Photos: Tanja Bause

COLOUR ... Christina Arnestam, Kate du Toit and Sue Wassung paint plastic bottles to make gift boxes.

## Handicrafts benefit local communities

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THE International Women's Association of Namibia (IWAN) consists of about 60 women who get together to raise funds for various projects in Katutura.

Members are supported in settling their families in Namibia and women from across the world can get together make friends, laugh and feel at home.

Once a week members gather at the house of Lilian Brell where they make gift boxes out of two-litre cooldrink bottles – an idea that was introduced by fellow member Jacqui Hope.

"At first we were collecting the bottles from the recycling bins across town, which was quite a dirty job scratching in bins for bottles," says Brell.

They then took the bottles home and cleaned them, which was another filthy job. Eventually the women approached Namibian Beverages and they now receive reject bottles which are clean and ready to be worked on.

The tops of the bottles are cut off, the bottles are then painted and decorated with napkins. They are then cut again, folded and finally rounded off with their own individual ribbons. Gift

boxes can be made to order in any colour or theme.

The women make gift boxes for weddings, birthday parties, Valentine's Day and for lodge operators, who place sweets in them for their guests. The gift boxes are indestructible and can be re-used over and over.

From the sale of the gift boxes IWAN helps the Katutura Old Age Home with fresh vegetables and medicines like cough mixtures and painkillers. They also help with clothing whenever a need arises.

The Baby Haven receives fresh fruit and yoghurt every week, as well as new toys here and there.

The pre-school run by ClaSH (an organisation for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing disabilities) also receives a month's worth of fresh vegetables, meat and yoghurt each month. The children also receive clothing when the need arises.

The Children's Cancer Ward at the Central Hospital receives toys, stationery, and books for the children. IWAN also donates washing powder so that the young patients' clothing can be washed.

The Megameno Home for Orphans has received a washing machine, pillows, curtains, bedding and other



CRAFTY ... Lilian Brell puts a serviette onto a gift box, with the finished product in the foreground.

materials needed for extensions to the house.

IWAN volunteers are working hard to raise money for milk formula

and food hampers for the children looked after by the Mount Sinai Centre.

To the Resource Centre at the Jacob Marengo

School the volunteers offer their time, as they help the children in the afternoons with their homework. They also play with the children, teach them English and help with resources like puzzles, books and games.

IWAN is not only active in Katutura, they also support the Ombili Primary School for San children north of Tsumeb. The children come from severely impoverished communities and are in need of almost everything from books to food, clothing, teaching aids and stationery, and IWAN helps as much as its funds allow.

The women raise money among themselves by hosting fun events like dinners and breakfasts once a week.

"I just love it. I lived in Maun (Botswana) for six years and there is nothing like this. A place where we as different women can come together, have lots of fun and still do so much good in the community," says Sue Wassung.

IWAN has members from 23 countries. The women can make gift boxes to order and to specifications and people interested can phone Lilian Brell at 081 243 5565.