

UTAC Spells Hope for Opuwo, Namibia

by Maren Symonds

Imagine that you live in a tiny African village far from the world's inquisitive gaze. Imagine that you and your neighbors eke out a living on less than \$2 per day and that 1 in 6 of you endures HIV/AIDS. Imagine that you are gifted and hard-working but you lack the means to earn income to support your family. *Where do you find hope to sustain your spirit?* If you live in Opuwo, Namibia, hope comes by way of Until There's A Cure® Foundation (UTAC) and the people who wear your hand-crafted bracelets.

Members of the Ovahimba tribe have been fashioning hand-carved jewelry for as long as anyone can remember. Local artists discovered that recycled PVC pipe proved excellent material for making bracelets. Using simple work spaces and basic tools, villagers turn would-be pieces of refuse into custom-designed works of art. All they need is access to commercial markets to sell their wares.



By happy coincidence, Coppelia Tarantal drew a 2-year assignment in Opuwo with the U.S. Peace Corps. Though her principal goal was HIV/AIDS education and prevention, she grasped the importance of microenterprise for improving the economic and emotional well-being of her charges. She added basic business training to her meetings about HIV/AIDS, and she took up the mantle to find international distribution for the Opuwo crafts.



Coppelia found UTAC through a connection with Bicycling Empowerment Network (BEN), a UTAC grantee. BEN ships second-hand bicycles and related parts from all over the world to local partners in developing countries where they are assembled and maintained. Bicycles provide basic transportation for health clinic workers to reach their HIV/AIDS patients, most of whom live 20 km or more from the nearest health facility. When Coppelia sounded the call for help, UTAC gave an enthusiastic response. Within weeks, the UTAC African Art bracelet was born.

This exquisite addition to the UTAC product family is a source of income and inspiration for the Opuwo villagers. The income they earn from creating bracelets provides food, education, and health care for the Opuwo children and instills a sense of dignity and confidence in their parents. Each person who wears the bracelet stands up for people living in a remote, oft-forgotten part of the world. Proceeds from UTAC's sales are granted back to fund a community vegetable garden to meet the nutritional needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.



Though Opuwo, Namibia may seem a world away, UTAC and others have found the means to stretch their helping hands across a continent and an ocean. It is easy to lend support to the cause. *Wear the African Art bracelet and make a tangible difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa.*

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Headquartered in Redwood City, CA, Until There's A Cure® Foundation is a national organization dedicated to AIDS awareness and prevention education, care and services for those living with AIDS, and vaccine development.