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## Stitching up torn lives (page 2 of 2)

By Glynis Horning



From Reader's Digest Magazine

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Today there are trendy teen Little Travellers, cute baby Little Travellers, and Janet's speciality – sassy footballer Little Travellers inspired by the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Each comes with a "passport" to document the places where they go. Customers are invited to post photographs of them in different locations on [littletraveller.org.za](http://littletraveller.org.za). To date, Little Travellers have crossed the Egyptian desert, basked on a beach in Timor, perched on a rock beside Denmark's Little Mermaid, and even scaled Kilimanjaro and Everest.

In 2006, Canadian medical student Ilan Schwartz volunteered as an intern in the centre's respite care unit and took home a bag of Little Travellers, opening a new door for distribution. Today, Woza Moya sends up to 10,000 a month to Canada, and has outlets in Australia (through Oxfam and Territory Colours), many European countries, the US, Korea and Japan.

"The more orders we get, the more crafters we can take on, and the nursing staff keep sending us women desperate to learn and earn," says Paula earnestly. "This project helps support them and the respite unit, and gives them self-worth and hope."

There is still a lot of stigma about HIV/AIDS, but at Woza Moya the women can talk openly and share their problems and solutions. Paula watches them join the project afraid and deeply depressed. "Then they grow wings!"

The women bring finished pieces to the centre every Friday. "They never let me down, even if they're so weak they have to be carried by relatives," says Paula. "There's an incredible energy and love here – even my kids sense it and adore coming." (She often brings daughters Ella, six, Tess, four, and son Angus, 18 months, to the centre.) "Everyone feels valued and important, a part of something bigger."

Woza Moya's most ambitious project yet is a commission for a beaded wall-hanging for Durban's spectacular new Moses Mabhida Stadium, built ahead of the World Cup. The women were asked to create a giant map of Africa from flat-beading (where beads are stitched to each other, not to fabric). They had just six weeks to complete it.

"I wondered if we could do it," confesses Paula, "But they proved again what teamwork can do!"

When Paula showed the women the completed map, stretching four by three metres, they were deeply moved to be part of an extraordinary artwork that would be seen by international dignitaries and celebrities. "They could see how weaker pieces were lifted by those that were stronger, but that however well or poorly beaded, each piece was needed," she marvels. Just like the women themselves.

**To help Paula Thomson and the women of Woza Moya make a difference you can purchase a Little Traveller from an Oxfam Australia shop around the country or online.**

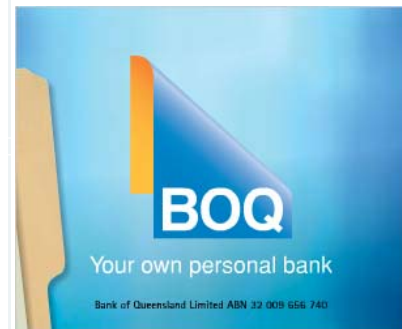
To purchase online click here - <http://www.oxfam.org.au/explore/hiv-and-aids/features/travellers-tales>

To find out more about the Little Travellers project go to - <http://www.littletraveller.org.za/> You can upload stories and pictures of your own Little Traveller -<http://mms.littletraveller.org.za/>

To find out more about the amazing work done at the Hillcrest AIDS Centre and the women of Woza Moya <http://hillaims.org.za/>

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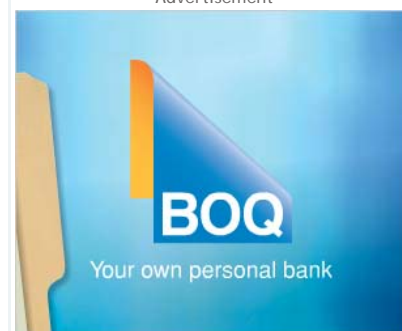
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— Former US governor Mark Warner

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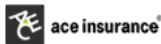
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