

London wowed by rural SA villager's crafts



SNAPPED UP: Themba Masala proudly displays his creations
Picture: LEONARD SHAPIRO

THEMBA Masala is still rubbing his eyes in disbelief after he secured an order to supply more than 3 000 decorative Christmas balls to a London chain store distributor.

Masala, a father of two from Raaswater, a small village near Upington in the Northern Cape, has also secured another order to supply 4 400 balls to Christmas Africa — a Cape Town company that markets and commissions the production of the intricate ornaments for the overseas market.

Masala's other creations, including his colourful lizards and fish, have also been in huge demand.

So, too, are tiny wooden cellphones made by craftsmen and women from a small village on the Mozambican border and beaded eggs made in Msinga in northern KwaZulu-Natal, which are being snapped up by Harrods in London.

Masala, who is being assisted by the Northern Cape's Arts and Culture Council, said he will use the income to support his two young children.

"I am already thinking about ideas for the next order. But I don't want to only make Christmas decorations. I can also design patterns which can be used on fabric for upholstery, curtaining, cushion covers and garment material," he said.

The council's craft development specialist, Leonard Shapiro, said: "Given the enormous talent in South Africa, it is inevitable that we will see an increasing number of products being supplied to both national and global markets."

Margie Robertson, director of Christmas Africa, said she was often overwhelmed by the demand for Christmas decorations with an African flavour from people in the US and parts of Europe. —
Suthentira Govender