

Crafty memory sticks create jobs

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FULLY functional, individual and funky USB memory sticks (pun intended!) hand-crafted from alien vegetation are now being produced in a small Northern Cape village called Kharkams.

Kharkams is about 20km from a town called Kamieskroon which is on the N7 in the beautiful Namaqualand region.

The crafts group is known as Kharkams Technology Crafters.

This is a craft business with a difference; high technology and hand-crafting are brought together by skilled wood-crafters.

Five previously unemployed crafters have recently undergone a skills training programme and have been supplied with specialised equipment which has enabled them to produce this exciting product.

The memory sticks are made from the branches of alien vegetation delivered weekly to the crafters by the Working for Water programme administered by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

The naturally occurring patterns on the bark mean that each stick is unique in its aesthetic appeal.

A space for the USB electronics is carefully hollowed out of the stick and it is then fixed into place using a hi-tech bonding material.

Each memory stick is hand-crafted with pride from start to fin-



UNIQUE: The team at work, above, had undergone skills training for their new venture. The memory sticks, right, are created from alien vegetation.

ish by a single crafter.

Once the memory stick has passed a number of quality checks, the crafter's name and photograph is stored electronically on the USB.

This project is about more than just the making of memory sticks.

It is fundamentally about job creation and contributes to the alleviation of poverty through harnessing existing craft skills and applying market-related design for the development of relevant craft products.

The project was supported by

Conservation International and the Development Bank of South Africa which are active in the region.

These two organisations' programmes ensure that the protection of plant species in this bio-diversity hotspot leads to the socio-economic development of the local communities.

Each 256 MB memory stick sells for R149.

● Inquiries and orders for memory sticks can be e-mailed to info@technologycrafters.co.za

