

Village Artisanal de Ouagadougou

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Décor and accessories with a story

Ordinarily, an empty can of condensed, sweetened milk seems to have come to the end of its useful life. But in the hands of a skilled artisan, the can is transformed into a great toy: A colorful little car, a butterfly or a dragonfly.



The little can started out on the shelf of a small boutique, one of the many that serve people living in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. After its owner has used the last sweet drop in her morning coffee, perhaps, the can seems useless. It is headed for the trash. Later that day, however, a local youth passes by and saves it from the trash dump. He is one of many young people in the city who collect cans that have been emptied of all sorts of food and drink. He then sells the empty cans to artisans at the Village Artisanal de Ouagadougou.

“It’s very good for the environment,” says Patricia Badolo, director of VAO. “It makes it so there is less trash going to dumps. Young people do it – they know the artisans and where to find the stuff and it earns them some money. And then we have some products we can sell outside of Africa.”

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