

little people company

Press Release

Personal Passion

The founder of the Danish Little People Company, Anne-Louise Thon Schur has three great passions: Interior decorating, Africa and Social Responsibility.

The children's furniture from Little People Company is the combined result of these three passions. They are designed based on Anne-Louise's personal ideals. They are stylish, handmade with a classic touch. But beyond being beautiful and functional furniture with a reasonable price tag, it is equally important for Anne-Louise that production is structured to generate economic development and jobs in Africa, primarily in Zimbabwe where the people are suffering severely because of the political situation.

Creating jobs, especially for female workers, strengthens the structure of entire villages from the core. It is most often women who endure the harshest of conditions, yet they have proven again and again that once they take charge of the family budget sustainable economic development quickly follows.

"For years I have had a passion for ethical, fair trade as well as corporate social responsibility (CSR). In 2002, I went back to school and earned a Master's degree in CSR Communications from Boston University. After graduating I started my first company, Allinfect, a consulting firm, advising globally on CSR," says Anne-Louise.



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The joy of decorating

Anne-Louise's passion for interior decorating came early. Some of her fondest childhood memories centre around running, biking, or walking around town with her dad, looking at homes; homes in need of restoration, dream homes, homes that were 'over the top' or homes that looked just right. It wasn't a far leap from this early interest in the exterior of homes to the interior so Anne-Louise was thrilled when she got the opportunity, a few years back, to try her hand at interior decorating of an entire house. She was hired to decorate a large villa in San Francisco in the U.S.

"It was an exciting challenge but when I got to the children's bedrooms I quickly realised that beautiful kids' furniture is a rare commodity. It was hard to find stylish and well made pieces of furniture for kids. They were either 'made in China' and seemed cheap or they were simply too expensive," she explains.

The path to Africa

After living for a number of years in England, France and Germany, where Anne-Louise worked in public relations and marketing for Woford, Cacharel and Wonderbra, she decided it was time to leave her glamorous life as she felt called to volunteer with an English charity organization and off she went to Zimbabwe.

"I was just plain tired of a life that focused on the right brand of jeans, jet-set night clubs or the fact that blue had become the new black – not to mention Liz Hurley's latest holiday destination. At heart, I am very Danish and down to earth. I just had to get away from empty conversation, superficial people and life in the fast lane."

Once in Zimbabwe, Anne-Louise became deeply engaged in the political situation hampering the country and she soon found herself working as a political activist against President Mugabe's government. That is, until she became the target of a death threat and decided to find a different way of working for change. Giving up the political path she saw a need to strengthen economic development at the micro level instead.

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"I am convinced that economic development is the only way for Africa to move forward. I have seen firsthand how much money is being wasted in the so-called charity world. Jump starting the economic wheels, or as the saying goes: "Giving people a fishing pole instead of a fish" is the way to go about creating lasting change. Starting Little People Company, with production in Zimbabwe under the present government, has been a long journey but one that has taught me invaluable lessons and perseverance. It's been the toughest challenge ever. I started the company in Zimbabwe under near impossible conditions. But my motto has always been: "where there is will and passion there is also a way." Our suppliers have been excellent at understanding our market and our concept and everyone has been 100% behind us. I strive to create a true partnership between customers and suppliers. It's a founding principle for Little People Company that we pay our suppliers a living wage while remaining competitive by working directly with suppliers and cutting out any middlemen. Our goal has always been fair trade *and* a fair retail price."

Anne-Louise presently lives in Zimbabwe with her husband and son but also spends a great deal of time in Denmark each year to ensure that Little People Company's products fit the European market and taste.

"I do have plans for expansion into other European markets, and it is very important that I continue to ensure that the stylistic framework for our products continues to align with what the discerning European consumer wants. Fair trade by itself is not enough. We need to create beautiful products that fit into the life style of a modern family," concludes Anne-Louise.

For further inspiration, press photos or general questions please go to our web store: www.littlepeoplecompany.dk or send an email to: lpc@littlepeoplecompany.dk.

