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Boiling Point: What can we learn from Africa's Likoma Island?



Pricilla Chirwa, foreground, and Pilirani Mwase make decorative items out of recycled glass and salvaged copper wire at the Katundu workshop on Likoma Island, in Malawi. (John Corrigan/Los Angeles Times)

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Oct. 31, 2024 6 AM PT

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I'm John Corrigan, Environment, Health and Science Deputy Editor for the L.A. Times; I'm filling in for Sammy Roth today.

LIKOMA ISLAND, Malawi — Pricilla Chirwa and Pilirani Mwase sit on a mat, backs against a concrete step, stringing copper wire around small wafers of green, white and amber glass that will be draped from chandeliers and other hanging decorations.

The glass pieces were made by churning broken beer and wine bottles through a makeshift tumbling machine rigged out of salvaged sewer pipe, water pump motors and bicycle parts. After a few days in the tumbler, the pieces emerge looking like the smooth, polished sea glass that washes up on the seashore.

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