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THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRIES IN UGANDA ✓

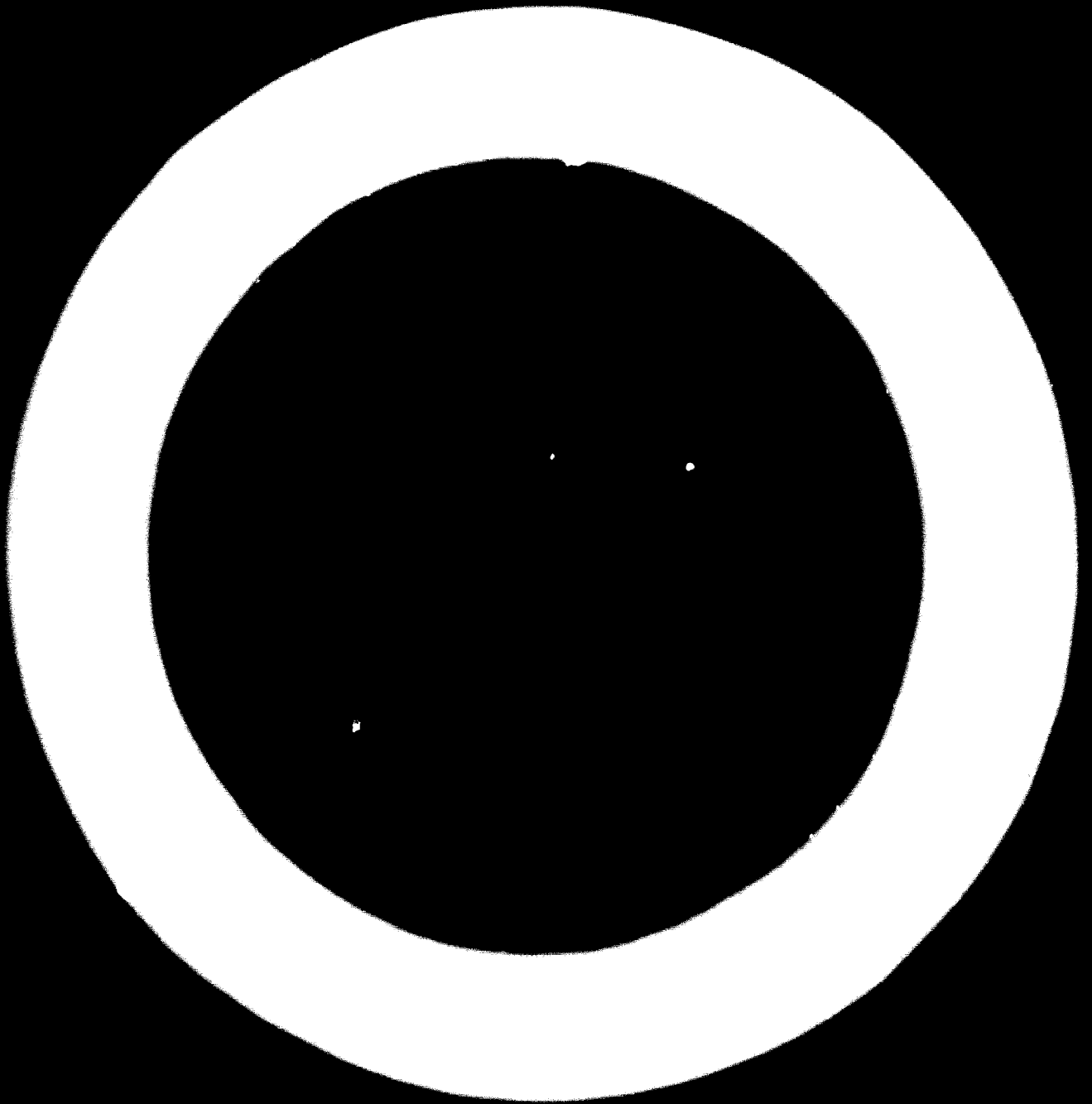
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Introduction

Uganda lies in Eastern Africa astride the Equator just east of the Continental Divide. The country's outline is almost square and is contained between latitude $4^{\circ} 12' N$ and $1^{\circ} 29' S$ and longitude $29^{\circ} 34' E$ and $35^{\circ} 0' E$. The country is landlocked, the nearest coast Kilindini (Zombasa) being over 800 miles away from the capital city Kampala. The total area is 91,076 square miles, of which 16,364 square miles is open water.

Uganda's population is 9,548,847 (1969 census); over 80% of the population is rural and illiterate. The means of production is mainly subsistence level. In general, the greater part of the community is poor. The average per capita income is Uganda shillings 500/- (£ 25 sterling) per annum.

Uganda is rich in natural resources that have yet to be exploited - forests, minerals, water, land and manpower.

The History of the Furniture and Joinery Industries in Uganda

It is not possible to give an account of the history of this industry because of the lack of literature. However, from time immemorial, people in Uganda have been engaged in some form of industry. This took the form of stools, utensils, weapons, canoes and the like. The industry used both wood and iron. The tools used were of very primitive form. The speciality followed families, i.e. the trade was handed down from father to son. Usually each village or area had its own industry, although there was an exchange going on between villages. The articles were also used as a form of "currency".

Present Situation

The furniture and joinery industries could be viewed under three broad headings:

1. Industry in large towns: Kampala City, Jinja and Mbale municipalities. These are either run by individuals employing a few men (anything up to ten people) or companies formed by a

a few people getting together, to be able to put the financial resources, expertise and management together. These groups have attained an international standard as they serve a community with a good income and a sense of beauty and quality. The tools and machines used range from hand tools, planing machines, mortisers and some power tools, as well as electric driven tools.

2. Small towns: these are served by individuals with a fair amount of skill in the trade. It is almost always done on an individual basis. They also employ a few men to help with heavy work. Mechanical means are not widely used.

3. Rural areas: the industry is centred around small trading centres and along the roads. These men are not employed full time in this industry. They usually produce the furniture as the need arises. They may also run farms - again at subsistence level.

It should be pointed out that the furniture and joinery industries in Uganda have not been fully commercialized. There are for example, no furniture exports; instead Uganda still imports furniture. The Ministry of Works and the Prisons Department are the only two bodies producing a fair amount of furniture for domestic use.

Large furniture organisations sell their products either by private arrangement or by tender. Many of these, too, have showrooms away from the workshops where they display and sell their products. The majority of the smaller producers, however, prefer to sell from their workshops in order to avoid many overhead costs.

The Sources of Raw Materials

The furniture and joinery industries utilise a high percentage of imported materials such as plywood, veneer and plain blockboards, particle boards, tubular steel, adhesives, wood

glue, foam rubber cushions and foams, synthetic leathers, furniture textiles (cloth), formica plastics and springs, only to mention a few. The following are locally produced (1970)

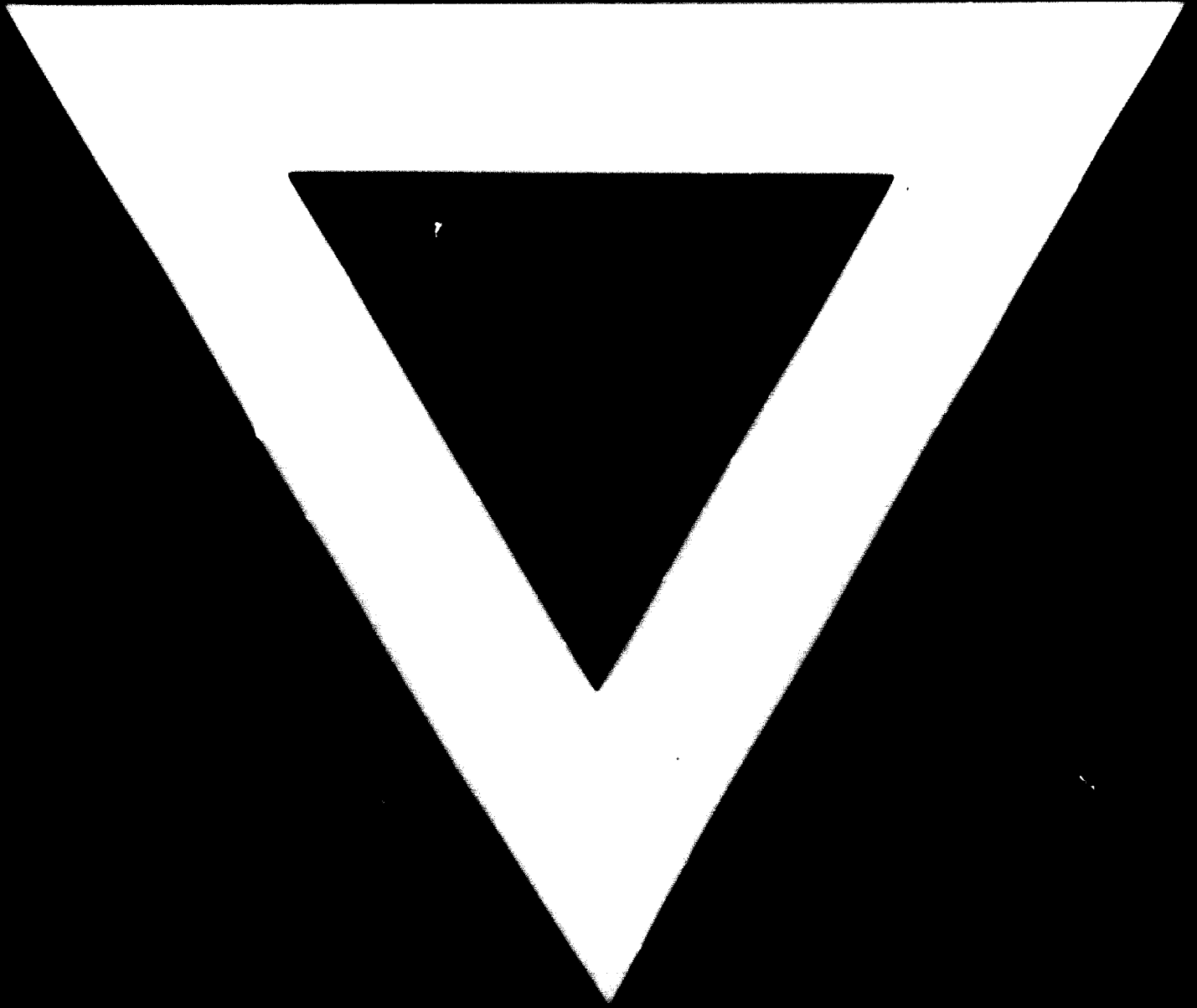
<u>Product</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Value in million Uganda Shillings</u>
Sawn wood	70,000 m	27.0 Millions
Plywood (poor quality)	2,033,000 m	17.6 Millions
Particleboard (poor quality)	157,170 m	1.4 Millions
Synthetic leather unknown (poor quality)		

The furniture and joinery industries face the problem of exorbitant prices of imported materials mentioned above.

Uganda is very fortunate to have natural timber of high quality. The following are some of the commonly used species: elgon olive, mahogany, iroko. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has gone a long way in preserving natural forests and introducing 'artificial' forests especially for soft wood.

Suggestions for Future Development

1. Co-operated effort by managers.
2. Loans for machinery.
3. Technical training for school leavers. There are already 9 technical schools offering introductory training in the furniture and joinery industries.
4. Technical and financial assistance from rich developed countries and the home governments to companies and individuals.
5. Improved quality to international standards of plywood, particle-board and synthetic leather.
6. General economic improvement of the country to enable people to utilise high-quality furniture. (It has already been pointed out that the furniture and joinery industries have a limited market).



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