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Technical Course on Criteria for the
Selection of Woodworking Machines

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REPORT ON THE WOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY
OF SRI LANKA ^{1/}

by

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^{1/} The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not
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Timber Extraction

A total of 2700.000 acres of forest is available for extraction of log timber in Sri Lanka. The present level of extraction is about 1.5 million cubic feet for the Ceylon Plywoods Corporation. This is considerably inadequate and sustained efforts have to be made to increase the supply of timber by reforestation and by improvement of the Rubber Wood by the Borone Treatment. The annual targets of reforestation of different species of timber are given below.

Teak	10.000 acres
Eucalyptes	1.500 "
Mahogany	2.000 "
SemiH/wood	500 "
Bamboo	500 "
Pine	<u>1.500 "</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>16.000 acres</u>

The Salawa Factory needs 2.5 million Peeler logs and 1.5 million Saw logs. The Gintota Factory requires 1.0 million Peeler + Saw logs. This quantity of logs for Salawa Factory was expected from Singharaja Forest close to Salawa Factory but this factory receives only 800.000 logs approximately per year. This is due to the banning of the extraction of timber due to conservatory measures. The major portion of the logs required for the Gintota Factory is fed by the Kameliya, Dediya gala/Nakiyadeniya Projects.

Processing

The entire requirements of Plywood and Chipboard for Sri Lanka is manufactured by the Ceylon Plywoods Corporation. The Corporation is also in the business and manufacture of furniture etc. for Government Departments and State Corporations in Sri Lanka. Production capacity of the Ceylon Plywoods Corporation is given below.

Malawa: Plywood in 3 ply equivalent - 15,000,000 sq.ft. per year
Chipboard - 9,000 m³
Saw Mill - 750,000 cubic feet of sawn timber
furniture - Door + window frames, block boards, office furniture
etc. to the value of 40-60 million Rupees per year.

Gintota: 50 million - plywood in 3 ply equivalent
Carpentry Division: Furniture to the value of about 12 million Rupees
This will make the sales turnover of the entire
Corporation to about 100 million Rupees.

Major quantity of house hold furniture is manufactured by the private sector and most of the work is done by skilled labour. Manufacture of household and school furniture is also done as a Cottage Industry. Most of this furniture was manufactured with the use of solid wood earlier, and with the introduction of veneered/unveneered chip board, decorative plywood by the Ceylon Plywoods Corporation, the use of solid wood was replaced the waste of valuable solid timber by use for the manufacture of furniture etc., was reduced.

The Corporation does not concentrate on the manufacture of carved furniture, although the private sector concentrates more on this type of furniture which has a better market with the tourist promotion. It is very clear from the Arts + Crafts of Ancient Lanka that this country has a very long history in the manufacture of carved furniture.

The Private Sector concentrates more in this business with vast propaganda and wide publicity and the Government Sector is unable to compete with the private sector in the manufacture and sale of furniture.

The manufacture of cane furniture is also done by the private furniture makers, in a small scale, with the little raw material available in the island. Manufacture of cane furniture is not improved as there is no better market due to the high cost of production. The manufacture of steel furniture is also done in a very small scale due to the non availability of material required for this purpose.

Prospects for improvements

The machinery used in the Salawa Factory and Cinteta is fairly good and a feasibility study has been done to put up a hard board factory of about 30 tons capacity. The entire quantity of machinery will have to be imported for this hard board factory and the machinery required will have to be purchased on loan - term basis.

Carpentry: The Carpentry Division, under the Plywoods Corporation, consists of seven workshops scattered all over the island. This has only one factory fully mechanized, situated at Ampara, in the Gal Oya Valley. This factory consists of a saw mill, machine shops and a timber impregnation and drying kiln.

Saw Mill: The saw mill converts about 100 cubic ft. of logs per day. This could be improved if the equipment is replaced with new machinery.

Machine Shop: The machine shop is equipped with different types of wood working machines such as tenoning, mortising, planing, thicknessing, moulding, sand papering, routers, cross cut and circular saws, wood working lathes, etc.

Timber Impregnation Plant: The timber impregnation plant has an impregnation cylinder of 8' in diameter and 35' in length which could take in 40-60 transmission poles at a time. This is the only impregnation plant available in the whole eastern province. The drying kiln has a capacity of about 200 cubic feet.

If these machines which are more than 25 years old are replaced with modern machinery we could increase the production to about five lakhs per month. Even the necessary spare parts for these machines are now not available in the local market and with the manufacturers as well. The other two partly mechanized workshops at Asgiriya and Moratuwa are equipped with circular saws and planners. If all these workshops in the Carpentry Division could be mechanized fully we could increase the production target to about 12 to 20 million per year. This will not only help to increase production but will also cut down the cost of labour which will bring down the cost of production too. The main

factor for the lack of machinery is due to the non-availability of foreign exchange as the foreign exchange is utilized more on the importation of agricultural machinery and equipment. As Sri Lanka is an agricultural country the government pays more attention to agriculture to make the country self-sufficient in food.

There are possibilities to have a small hard board factory even in Ampara for which raw material is available. This could be done if assistance is given. There is also scope for a handicraft unit and this could be done at the Ampara Workshop if the required machinery is provided.

It is unlikely that heavy machinery would be manufactured in this country in the near future. However, some progress is being made in the manufacture of some tools, spare parts and sand paper although they are not up to the standard of the imported items.

The ways and means by which UNIDO could provide assistance.

(1) By training the managerial and technical personnel in a suitable country in the following fields:

- (i) saw milling
- (ii) seasoning and impregnation of wood
- (iii) designing and manufacture of furniture

(2) By assisting the Corporation in the supply of machinery and spares on loan term basis.

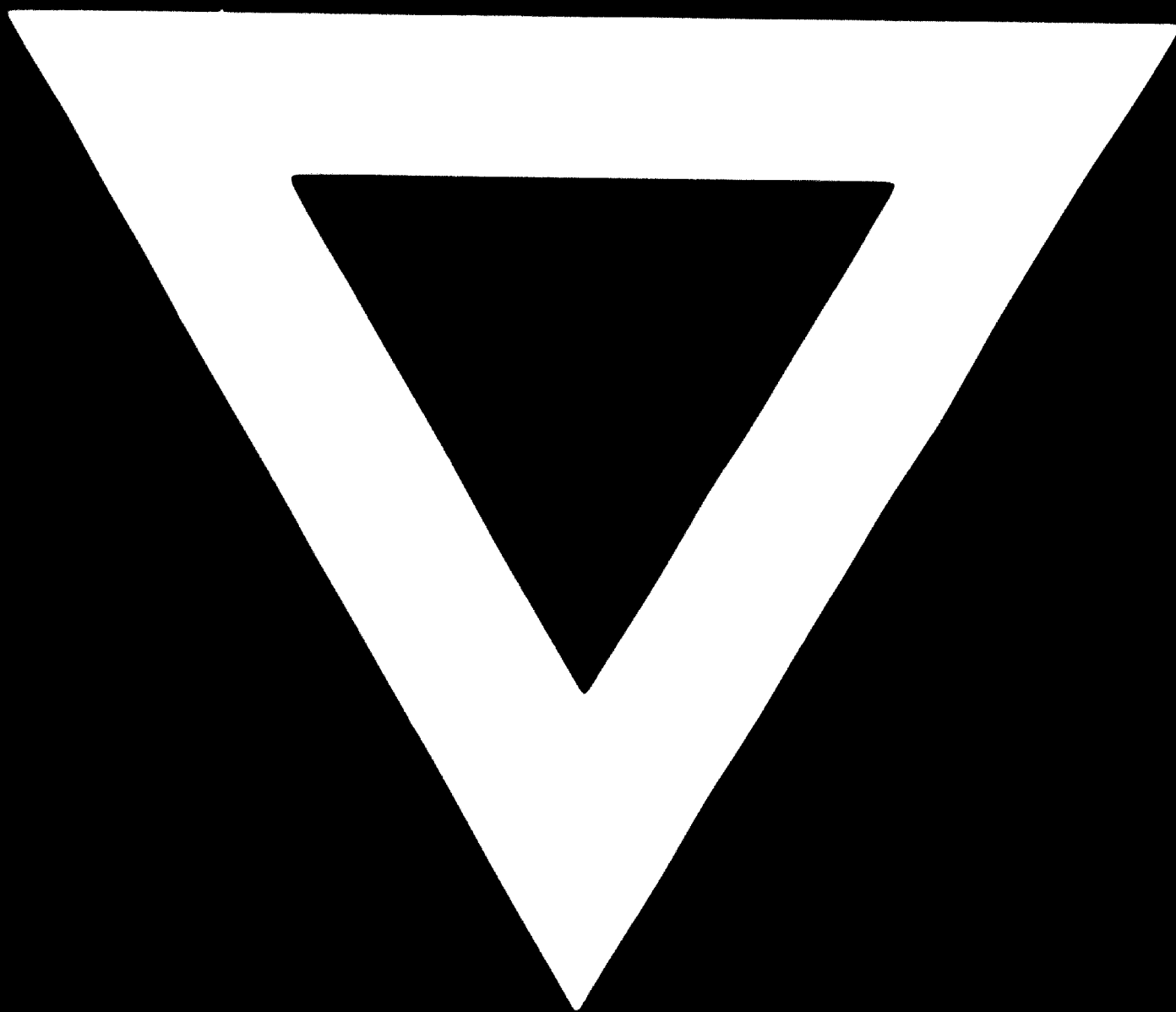
(3) To arrange experienced personnel to visit the factories under the Ceylon Plywoods Corporation and train workers on the job. This is very important as the present machines are very old and the necessary technical data is not available.

Recently I was able to get in touch with a UNIDO expert who visited the workshop at Ampara under the Plywoods Corporation for a few days and during his very short stay at Ampara he was able to train some of the workers on saw doctoring.

(4) Explore possibilities for an export market for furniture etc. manufactured by the Ceylon Plywoods Corporation.



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