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**LEATHER
GOODS
DEVELOPMENT
CUM
DEMONSTRATION
CENTRE,
MADRAS,**

DP/1976/1/113

BIDA.

LEATHER GOODS DEVELOPMENT AND DEMONSTRATION CENTRE, MADRAS (1976)

Prepared by the Government of India for the
LEATHER GOODS DEVELOPMENT AND DEMONSTRATION CENTRE,
MADRAS

LEATHER GOODS DEVELOPMENT AND DEMONSTRATION CENTRE, MADRAS

United Nations Development Programme

LEATHER GOODS DEVELOPMENT CUM DEMONSTRATION
CENTRE, MADRAS
DP /IND /71 /613
INDIA

Technical report: Leather goods designing and styling

Prepared for the Government of India
by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization,
executing agency for the United Nations Development Programme

Based on the work of E. C. Newman, expert in
leather goods designing and styling

United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Vienna, 1976

Explanatory notes

The following abbreviations are used in this report:

CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
CLRI	Central Leather Research Institute
LGDDC	Leather Goods Development and Demonstration Centre
SSI	Department of Small Scale Industry

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SUMMARY

The present report concerns the work performed by an expert in leather goods designing and styling while he was attached, during the twelve-month period January 1975 to January 1976, to the Leather Goods Development and Demonstration Centre of the Central Leather Research Institute at Madras. This institution is a project (DP/IND/71/613) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the executing agency is the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The expert conducted courses in leather goods styling and designing. Together with a local counterpart, he visited leather goods manufacturers in the places where this industry is concentrated (Bombay, Calcutta, Agra, Kanpur, Madras and New Delhi) so as to discern the actual situation and real needs of this industrial branch. It was found that only a few units in India could produce in a volume large enough to meet export orders and possibly meet delivery dates. However, even if these deficiencies were overcome, the problem of meeting quality standards would remain.

The basic problem of the Indian leather goods industry is lack of knowledge of methods of construction and of the skillful use of the simple equipment, such as sewing machines, required for the uniform production of leather goods. More sophisticated machinery is not yet needed.

If tangible improvements in this industry are to be achieved, short courses on various aspects of leather goods manufacturing should be conducted in the places where this industry is concentrated. A key to the successful implementation of such a programme would be the careful selection and appropriate prior training of any counterparts assigned to work with international experts assigned to it.

The attention of industry should be drawn to the wealth of information that has been collected and compiled by international experts and their colleagues abroad. The information should be brought to industry by means of short seminars on specific problems, practical demonstrations and follow-up visits to factories by international experts and properly trained counterparts. The already existing partial listing of machinery manufactured in India should be expanded and elaborated.

INTRODUCTION

The Leather Goods Development and Demonstration Centre (LGDDC) is part of the Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI) at Madras. This institute is a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the executing agency is the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The objectives of this project are as described below. The present report concerns the work performed by an expert in leather goods designing and styling while he was assigned to LGDDC during the twelve-month period January 1975 to January 1976.

Long-range objectives

The project has two long-range objectives: first, to effect a substantial increase in productive employment in the small-scale and cottage industrial sectors, both of which are considered particularly suitable for the manufacture of leather goods, and secondly, to preserve and, if possible, to increase the traditional importance of the leather industry as an export industry, and in particular by encouraging it to export leather in more highly finished and thus more valuable forms than it has in the past.

Immediate objectives

The immediate objectives of the project are the six following:

1. To investigate and develop the market potential, particularly for export, of leather goods that would combine Indian artistic traditions with modern functional and fashion requirements.
2. To develop and demonstrate production methods for the production of high-quality leather goods and their components suitable for the small-scale and cottage industrial sectors, including the selection of quality materials and the use of simple machinery.
3. To provide, for leather manufacturers in these two industrial sectors, facilities relating to the functional adaptation of designs; the testing of products; the improvement and maintenance of quality and the establishment of standards; the operation and maintenance of simple machinery used in leather processing; and the managerial, financial, productivity and marketing aspects of the small-scale production of leather goods.

4. To plan and execute training programmes relevant to the improvement and increased productivity of small-scale and cottage producers of leather goods.
5. To establish a basis for promoting the production of marketable leather goods and their components by such enterprises, with special reference to export markets.
6. To secure, in conjunction with the Ministry of Industrial Development and the Development Commissioner, Small Scale Industries (SSI), the ready availability to these producers of high-quality machinery and equipment auxiliaries and fittings required for the production of leather goods.

PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT

Duties of the expert

The object of the present report is to relate the work that the expert was able to accomplish to the duties that had been assigned to him. These duties were:

To assist the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) in organizing the LGDDC and in the performance of his work

To train the LGDDC staff in the creation of modern designs and styles of leather goods suitable for export markets, and particularly that of North America

To organize, at the LGDDC, courses in design and styling and concerning the leather goods industry in general, and to provide instruction on the latest and probable future trends in design and styling

To participate actively in the transfer of new designs from the drawing board to the production line

To collaborate with his local counterparts (see annex) in design and styling and with other experts and their counterparts to coordinate all efforts to develop LGDDC

Situation at the arrival of the expert

When the expert reported for duty in January 1975, a design course had already been in operation for 17 weeks. It had been organized by the CTA with the assistance of his acting counterpart. During this period five standard designs suitable for export goods had been elaborated for future fabrication. The CTA asked the expert to assume charge of this course, organize the rest of the programme and train the local counterpart staff. It was this aspect of the project that absorbed most of the time and effort of the expert. Although the project had been operative for 15 months, it was still working under improvised conditions. Its building had not been fully completed and the needed tools had not yet been delivered.

The first design course

The purpose of this course was to develop design capabilities, particularly for goods for the North American market, stressing fashion and styling, while drawing on India's artistic traditions. However, there were many obstacles,

among them long-standing traditions and habits, unsatisfactory local conditions and remoteness for the desired market, which in any case has traditionally regarded India as a source of raw and semi-finished materials.

None of the students had ever been outside of India or had even been employed in the leather goods industry. Also, it became evident that the scheduled date for the operational use of the project building would not be met. Consequently, increased emphasis was placed on pattern cutting so as to limit the use of equipment. Because of their lack of knowledge of the subject, the counterparts assigned were of little value. Also, although only such basic tools and materials as a knife, a cutting block, a pair of compasses, a ruler and paper are needed in teaching pattern cutting, many of these things were unavailable and had to be improvised. For example, the locally made cutting blocks were so uneven as to be useless. However, it was possible to maintain the interest of the students for some time by having them make complete patterns and small items from materials provided by the administration.

There were further difficulties, such as the unsuitability of the accommodations in which the experts had to work on the manuals and notes required for the course. Furthermore, at the beginning of April 1975, the CTA and the Project Executive were called away to attend a seminar in France. It thus became necessary to divide the students into two groups, with a counterpart in charge of each. To complicate matters still further, one of these counterparts was granted a one-month leave of absence, a circumstance of which the expert was informed only on the day before his departure.

Under these circumstances, it is unsurprising that, when the first course was concluded in July 1975, no samples or new designs, other than the five already scheduled for production, had been produced. While the students had acquired some knowledge of the industry, they had not been exposed to modern fabrication methods. Nevertheless, all of the students who were graduated were satisfied that the basic training that they had received had been useful, and all had acquired some understanding of the techniques and methods of production and recognized the necessity of improving the quality of Indian-made leather goods. All of them have since been absorbed by the leather-working industry, but it will require some time for any beneficial effect that they may have to become noticeable. It is to be hoped that they will be able to return for a refresher course and demonstrations of fabrication.

Fact-finding and lecture tour

At the conclusion of the first course, the expert and a counterpart were sent on a tour of leather-working centres (Bombay, Calcutta, Agra, Kanpur and New Delhi) in August 1975. This tour was not only informative to the team; it permitted it to make direct contributions to the industry. During visits to plants, the expert and his counterpart were able to give on-the-spot advice and to outline what LGDDC in Madras was trying to accomplish. Lectures on plant layout were delivered, and information about basic machinery and where it could be acquired was provided. All of this information was badly needed.

The team found that what was needed to improve the leather-working industry was not sophisticated machinery but improvement in basic production methods. Only a few enterprises could produce in volume sufficient to satisfy orders from abroad and possibly meet delivery dates. However, even these firms would have difficulty in meeting quality standards.

In New Delhi, liaison was established with both SSI and the State Trading Corporation (STC). The latter organization set up some visits to factories in that area. It was learnt that the objectives of STC are to obtain orders from abroad and distribute them among various manufacturers of leather goods. The problem faced by STC was that it was unable to guarantee that these enterprises could actually meet either the quality standards or the delivery dates required. The mission was instrumental in "grading" some of these enterprises; by this is meant that certain units that could produce goods of similar standard could be grouped. However, these producers would still need guidance and basic instruction if their output is to be satisfactory in terms of volume, quality and promptitude. As a direct help to industry, short courses on specific problems should be offered.

It was also found that many manufacturers in and around New Delhi were making leather clothing, but that most of them lacked sufficient orders to keep them busy. There is thus a potential for increased production. Some manufacturers of leather jackets of good quality have difficulty in obtaining suitable leather, and others cannot always obtain materials of satisfactory weight and colour-fastness. Marketing is another problem; some producers depend on relatives abroad or work with STC. Unless they are already exporting their goods, they have difficulty in obtaining the foreign currency needed to finance the exhibition of their products abroad.

It became evident that the leather industry is in urgent need of guidance. However, since the LGDDC project is now well established in Madras, short courses (of 10 to 12 weeks) in construction methods and basic pattern cutting should be conducted in other centres, where the facilities of SSI could be used. An expert should be made available for short periods to conduct such special courses. The industry would derive immediate benefit from such an approach, which would also permit the project to concentrate on its long-term objectives of training operators and mid-management personnel.

Modifications of the programme

In order to assess the needs of the industry, a brief survey of the leather-goods plants in and around Madras was conducted. The expert also attended the annual Tanners' Get-Together there to meet as many as possible of the manufacturers. After the survey was completed, it was considered necessary to postpone, temporarily, the emphasis on fashion articles, since the fittings and accessories required were unavailable. It was therefore decided to concentrate on standard articles such as small items and shoulder bags, which are normally purchased in bulk by western markets, provided that specifications are met and delivery is prompt.

As the principal limitations of the Indian leather goods industry are lack of knowledge of construction methods and poor skills in the use of equipment required for uniform production, such as sewing machines, it was decided to prepare a programme relating to pattern-cutting and construction methods. It proved to be necessary to modify the programme still further, since it is impossible to design leather goods without some knowledge of methods of construction and assembly.

It was thus necessary to start with the most basic principles. Such teaching should not take long, provided that the students have been recruited from producers of leather goods or have similar manufacturing background. In the present case, however, since the students were quite inexperienced, it was necessary to go at a slower pace. It should be borne in mind that design courses in leather-goods colleges are normally of three to four years' duration.

The second design course

It had been decided that the next group of students would be drawn from the leather-goods industry. At the Appointments Committee meeting, which was

attended by both the CTA and the expert when the first course had been completed, 12 candidates were interviewed but none of them were found to be acceptable. Several members of the committee expressed the view that more suitable people would have presented themselves had they received earlier notification. It was then proposed to advertise these openings again and to appoint suitable counterparts to the expert before the second course began in September 1975. These vacancies were accordingly advertised, but no effort was made to speed up recruitment.

Although the second course has been in progress for some time, no action has been taken to fill the vacant local counterpart posts. The project staff have been informed that the administration of LGDDC wishes the locally available counterpart staff to be upgraded. This proposal is difficult to accept, as there are individuals in other parts of the country who are familiar with the leather goods industry and who would thus be more valuable.

Local counterpart staff

The success of the project is dependent upon the quality of the counterpart personnel assigned to it. It is here that the principal weakness of the project lies. On the arrival of the expert, two local counterparts had already been assigned to the project from the staff of CLRI. One was an artist, the other a scientist; neither had any knowledge of the leather goods industry or could produce simple working patterns. Furthermore, it was understood that these counterpart personnel had been assigned only temporarily and could be replaced.

Under these circumstances, it was decided to train these counterparts together with the students, one for a future fabrication course, the other for a design and patternmaking course. During the course, however, it became evident that some of the students showed greater aptitude than the counterparts. In order to keep them ahead of the students, it was necessary to spend some time with them to instruct them in the next day's work. Even this was difficult, since the expert had to conduct the course single-handedly.

The viability of the project depends on the quality of the counterparts. They should be chosen with care and with the participation of the expert. In the present case, it would probably have been better had they been recruited from outside CLRI, perhaps from SSI or from the trade. As it happened, in the

LGDDC, after a full year of work, only one counterpart could possibly be sent abroad for training. While he has no experience in designing or in pattern-making, he is willing to learn and his attitude towards his students is correct. It is to be hoped that training and exposure to modern industry would be beneficial to him.

Information

Traditionally, the Indian leather goods industry has been very much of a closed corporation; information about it could be gained only by experience. Few manuals or proper textbooks exist to help industry; the only ones that have been produced are not only out of date but out of print. Project personnel have therefore collected as much information as possible from their own experience and from that of many colleagues of the Cordwainers Technical College in London. These notes should be useful in the future courses. More effort should, however, be made to publish manuals on available and appropriate machinery, methods of production, and plant organization and management. While there is now a wealth of information within LGDDC prepared by the international staff, it has yet to reach industry. Positive action is needed to draw the interest of industry to the project. This objective could be met by conducting short seminars on specific industrial problems, by practical demonstration, and by follow-up visits to factories by international experts and their properly trained counterparts.

There is also a lack of information on the equipment and machinery manufactured in India. A complete list of such equipment should be drawn up and the quality of the individual items should be checked. This list should also show the prices. A partial listing of this kind has been prepared by the project and is already available.

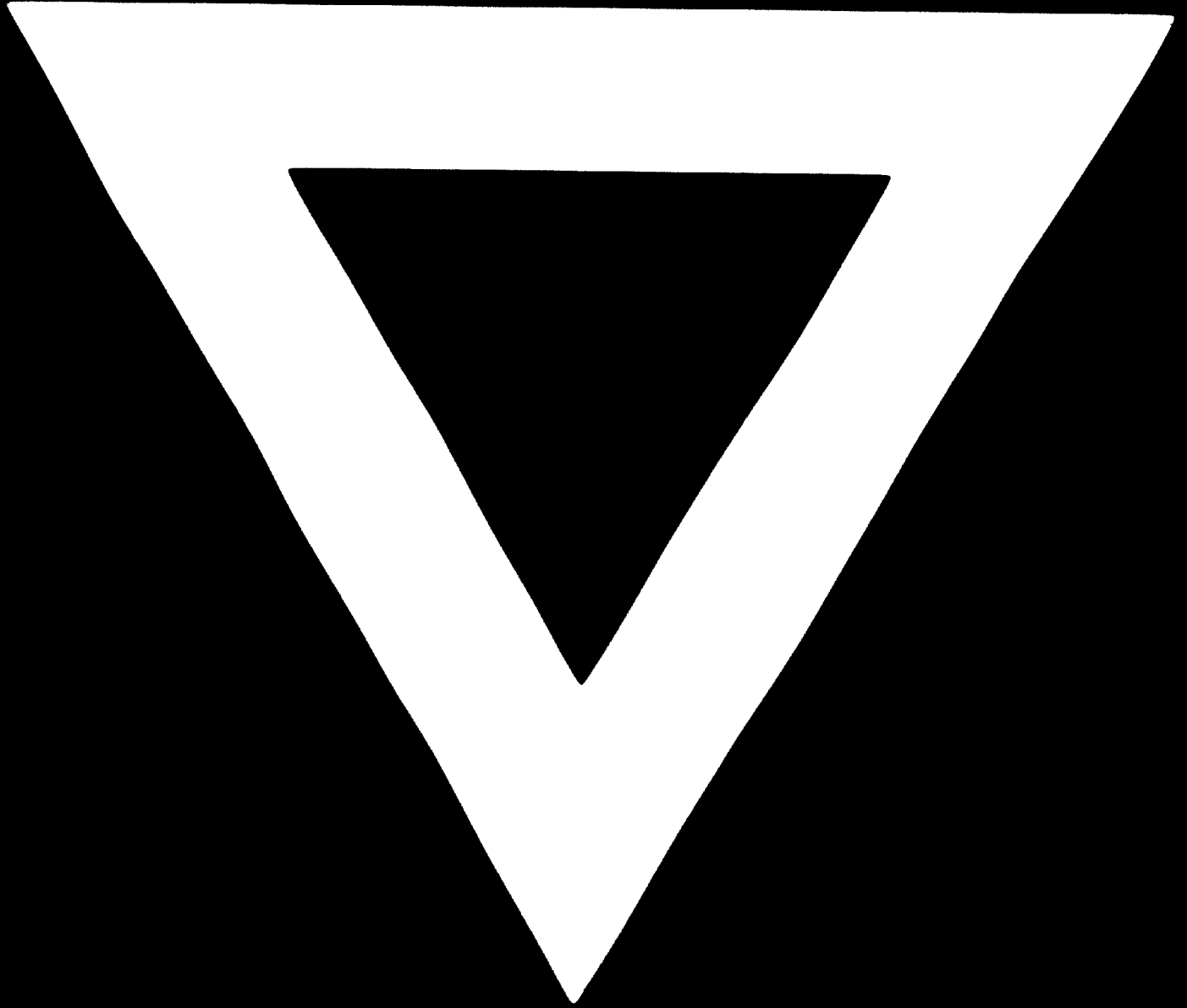
Annex

STAFF OF DESIGN COURSE

<u>Name</u>	<u>Job title</u>	<u>Dates of service</u>
E. C. Newman	Expert in Leather Goods Designing and Styling	January 1975 to January 1976
A. C. Basappa	Design Counterpart	November 1974 to date
P. Ramakrishnan	Design Counterpart, Fabrication	November 1974 to date



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