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ESTABLISHMENT OF A KNITWEAR FACTORY IN LOBATSE

DP/BOT/86/002/11-04

BOTSWANA

Technical report: Assistance to the Tiro Ya Diatla Knitting Project*

Prepared for the Government of Botswana
by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization,
acting as executing agency for the United Nations Development Programme

Based on the work of Svanhild Abonde
Knitwear Designer

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United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Vienna

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REPORT - TIRO YA DIATLA KNITTING PROJECT.

DP/BOT/86/002/11-04/J:13102

DURATION 15.9.-31.10.87 (First Phase)

DESIGNER: Svanhild Aboude

The purpose of the project is to assist Tiro ya Diatla Spinning Factory to expand its production into fashionable wollen knitwear.

The first week I made up a range of colours which correspond to the general trends on the market for the winter 88-89. On my way to Botswana I spent two days in Florence visiting the Pitti Filati; which is a fair considered to be the most important for designers to see the coming trends for the season one year ahead. As Tiro's strong point is the beautiful wide range of colours we could use quite a lot of colours already existing. About ten new shades were added. According to the trends the colour range now includes forty colours, which is very good and we have used them all in the designs. So we have a great variety of colours in each garment and 5-6 different swatches of each style.

Already from the first beginning I had in mind to use some patterns from this area of Africa and to combine these with the fashion trends in Europe and Canada/US. These were also the thoughts of Tiro and the name of the collection was agreed to be Tiro Afrique. As the number of intarsia machines is very limited, we had to make a compromise and also make some quite ordinary looking sweaters. But as the colours are good that will complete the range. I made about 20 different styles but the time did not allow more prototypes to be made up. Out of these 1/3 is intarsia. I used some motives from the tapestries from Tiro weaving department, what describes the village life in Botswana. We made the front part on intarsia machine and back and sleeves on the double bed machine. For more details we used embroidery to help the work of the intarsia machines. I also used rock paintings as an embroidery pattern and a stylised African landscape. We also used embroidery on a sweater with flower motive. These are, I believe, the right method to use because

you get the very interesting handmade looking sweater. This kind of knitwear, one cannot buy at a reasonable price on the market we are aiming at. Another idea was to make stylised nonfigurative patterns taken from the fences and decorations on the houses. These also turned out very well. On the usual machines we used stripes and fancy patterns from African necklaces or beadwork to get more classical sweaters. With these, we also tried to make some details by hand to stress the handmade impression. Enclosed please find photos of the range.

PROBLEMS

I think that the machines chosen are not the right choice. We have too little amount of intarsia machines in combination to the double bed machines. The linking machines do not correspond to the knitting machines according to gage and consequently the seams are too tight. They will be changed in the near future. I strongly point out that more intarsia machines are needed.

The yarn of Tiro is not yet as good as it should be for production of high standard knitwear. Some yarns are thicker some thinner according to colour. This problem is now to be solved at the spinning mill and apparently will be solved at the end of the year.

ADVANTAGES

The colours are excellent. The yarn which was too hard before, is softer after drycleaning. It is a great advantage to have combined spinning and knitting as you seldom have to wait for new colours to be made.

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MEASURES

In order to keep up with people in fashion trends, marketing and production, I recommend that some magazines should be ordered. I.e. Elle or Marie Claire from France. Grazia or Gioya from Italy and Vogue or Elle from USA. As we make sportswear for both men and women, I would also recommend Uomo from Italy.

MARKETING

The choice of channels for marketing should be investigated very carefully. It should be agents whose customers are interested in handmade, high quality fashion sport sweaters. As the name is Tiro Afrique, the collection cannot be manufactured in common Africa shops or on mail order. I suggest that one or two good fashion fairs should be attended to get a name and to find the right customers. For example the Pret-a-porter in Paris; New York Pret or Scandinavian Fashion Fair in Copenhagen.

There is also a market in Botswana because there is nothing like this on the market for tourists. Also in Zimbabwe there could be a market. I also suggest that a simple but attractive brochure should be made. I have made a sample order for my shop in Helsinki to test the garments and to have more information about the success of Tiro Afrique on the retail market.

As a whole I believe this is a very good project and look forward to continue with the second phase. I suggest that I spend one month in Lobatse in March/April to check the production

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and to get the feed back from the first collection as well as to work on the sketches and colours for the new collection. In September/October I should come back to make the prototypes and swatches. I also hope to continue my work with Tiro on a free lance basis after phase two as it is important to continue the line of design, provided that it has been a success.