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SURVEY OF HANDICRAFTS IN THE IVORY COAST

Notes for a report prepared

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This document reproduces, almost word for word, some notes on which Mr. Céré was working shortly before his death on 20 December 1961. The Workshop Secretariat has made only a few essential editorial changes in these notes, which are obviously incomplete. The opinions expressed in the document are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

I. INTRODUCTION (general position with regard to handicrafts.)

1. The Ivory Coast possesses few mineral or power resources and this acts as a brake upon the development of large-scale industries. Most of the consumer and semi-consumer goods are imported, the country paying for them mainly by exports of agricultural produce. It would be desirable for the country eventually to derive the greatest possible benefit from its natural wealth and for large numbers of consumer goods to be manufactured locally by craft industries using indigenous raw materials (textiles, wood, leather, wicker and so forth), which would give employment to available manpower at present unemployed or under-employed (slack season in agriculture) and be based on existing traditions and activities.

2. Like all other African countries, the Ivory Coast has reasonably well developed traditional handicrafts.

There is intense activity throughout the territory. There is not a town or even a village which does not possess its craftsmen, who generally include:

weavers
 jewellers
 ivory workers
 wood-carvers
 joiners
 blacksmiths
 carpenters
 masons
 potters
 basket-makers
 metal founders

Although there are no general handicraft statistics or craft registers, the numbers engaged in various crafts in the following towns or regions are estimated at:

weavers	5,000 (M'Bahiakro, Tiébissou)
potters	2,500 (Korhogo, Bouaké)
basket-makers	1,000 (southern Ivory Coast)
jewellers	1,500 (Abidjan, Dabou, Bouaké)
ivory workers	500 (Abidjan, Daloa, Gagnoa, Man)
wood-carvers	200 (Korhogo, Daloa, Gagnoa)
joiners and carpenters	10,000
masons	20,000

3. There is often a link between craft and ethnic origin. Thus the Senufo are often wood-carvers, the Diyula ivory workers, the Senegalese jewellers, the Ghanians shoe-makers, the Malis metal founders, the Ebrie masons, the Baule weavers, and so forth.

4. One of the characteristics of handicrafts in the Ivory Coast is that those engaged in the work are almost all men.

The standing of the craftsmen varies, as the distribution of the proceeds from the work is in the hands of a few work leaders and there is little or no independence within each craft.

Craftsmen from all parts of the country tried in 1958 to form an Ivory Coast Craftsmens Association.

This embryo Chamber of Trades proved unable, for lack of a broad policy and clearly defined aims, to survive the various difficulties that arose within the group, which in the urban centre of Abidjan had about 350 members.

5. However, the Government of the Ivory Coast, which would like the handicrafts to be developed for economic, social and political reasons, took up this work of reorganization and the Ministry of Technical Education was instructed to enquire into and review the question of handicrafts and how they should be organized.

In March 1960 a Handicraft Training Department was set up in the Ministry, its main purpose being to get to know the craftsmen, their needs and desiderata and, most important of all to win their confidence and give them confidence in themselves.

To do this, it was necessary to convince them that the establishment of a government department was not interference but arose from a desire to help them achieve a better organization of work and markets, obtain supplies and improve their techniques and social status.

At present, two embryonic departments (in the Ministries of Planning and National Education) are beginning to handle these problems but lack the necessary facilities. Moreover, the Ivory Coast Loan Society makes very few loans to craftsmen as no technical supervisory body exists.

II. PROSPECTS

In order to assess the prospects for handicrafts, one must be clear as to their origins.

In a developing country like the Ivory Coast handicrafts were in the beginning a highly developed type of work - unlike work on the land or bartering within or between tribes - whose purpose was to make or fashion essential articles for family use. Thus at the outset handicrafts served a utilitarian purpose.

As part of the development of a new economic life, the traditional, essentially utilitarian, handicrafts gradually found themselves in competition with factory-made goods, frequently imported from abroad, whose cost, despite a relative decline in labour costs, was the same as, if not lower than, that of the handicraft products, and which, above all, were more durable. The enamel dish and the aluminium pan successfully competed with pottery; plastic sandals are cheaper and last longer than the locally made samara or babouche, and so forth. It was only through a relative reduction in the hourly wage paid for local labour incorporated in their products that certain categories of craftsmen producing utilitarian articles, such as small tailors, some shoemakers, masons and joiners, were able to hold their own but it has meant small earnings for the craftsman and a decline in the traditional quality. Consequently, some other categories of craftsmen have turned to another type of handicraft which has ceased to be utilitarian and are producing articles of traditional design that are sold more for ornament than for use. This type of handicraft, which I shall call artistic, through local sales to tourists and the educated classes in the country, can provide a living for craftsmen such as potters, jewellers and some iron-workers and makers of samaras and babouches. Furthermore, such handicrafts can bring in considerable earnings at the national level if export marketing is well organized (this possibility has already been turned to account in countries such as Morocco and to a lesser extent Tunisia, which earn considerable amounts from the export of a large part of their handicraft production).

Lastly, having passed from the utilitarian to the artistic stage, handicrafts will have yet another function to perform in the development of the Ivory Coast. In accordance with the Government's expressed intention, the agricultural development of the Ivory Coast will go hand in hand with its industrial development, but agricultural development will be based on increased agricultural productivity and thus a certain amount of labour will be set free (fewer agricultural workers will be needed to provide the whole population with more and better food). On the other hand, the first industries that can be established in a non-industrialized country are either heavy industries processing primary products or light industries assembling

semi-finished products. These, it so happens, are two types of industries which are not highly labour-intensive. The most labour-intensive industries are those converting crude heavy products into semi-finished products and such industries are not as a rule established until the second stage. It will therefore be necessary to plan how to use the surplus manpower which is bound to be released from the agricultural sectors and for which there will be no immediate prospect of employment in the newly-established industrial sector. In my opinion, handicrafts will have a part to play there too by switching over to a pre-industrial type of handicraft. This would necessitate first a survey of all the resources of the Ivory Coast to see which could be used industrially in manufacturing small machine parts or consumer goods' components. Thereafter, every craftsman in every village could be set to making one or another of these machine parts or consumer goods' components, care being taken to ensure that the standard design and pattern are clearly defined, that simple instructions for manufacture can be given, and that the source of energy is consistent with the local resources available to the craftsman, either his own human energy or later on, when it proves possible to extend the supply, electricity. These articles, machine parts or components for consumer utensils, would then be collected up and assembled in workshops in the towns or minor population centres. By this means it would be possible to make use locally of the manpower released from agriculture and to increase the Ivory Coast's industrial potential rapidly. Some of these articles could be finished off with high precision or high quality components which could not be made by the craftsmen but would be imported or manufactured locally in modern factories and assembled with the craftsmen's products to form complete units.

Without going so far as that, studies could be made to ascertain whether a number of products which are now imported could not be directly manufactured in the Ivory Coast by its craftsmen; for instance, if the clays of the Ivory Coast are suitable, local potters could be entrusted with the manufacture of post insulators for use in telephone or even electric installations. It should be possible to find other similar examples.

We have thus defined three types of handicraft:

- utilitarian;
- artistic;
- pre-industrial.

These three types of handicraft differ fundamentally and if experts are to be sent to study the handicraft problem, three persons, one for each type, would in fact be required.

It should also be noted that, while there are technical problems to be solved with each type, the most important problem is economic. The sources of raw materials and then the markets for the products, must be studied and organized before the additional technical training is undertaken. Handicrafts should be assisted only in so far as they are remunerative when judged by progressive economic criteria, and this will necessitate changes in some of the traditional methods used in the handicrafts.

The problem of markets is also connected with the question of quality of product. While the State can be of considerable assistance in the marketing of the products, it must also assume responsibility for controlling their quality, thus helping to ensure regular markets.

III. AN EXAMPLE OF TRAINING FOR RURAL CRAFTSMEN - THE GAGNOA RURAL TECHNICAL CENTRE

I have chosen to refer to this project because in my opinion its aims and methods in regard to vocational training deserve attention on account of the efforts which have been made to adapt them to the needs of the rural populations and minor economic centres of the Ivory Coast.

There was never any question, of course, of copying the training given in France or in other countries whose needs and resources differ from those of the Ivory Coast; the object was rather to cater for actual conditions, in this instance the needs of Bété village, the town of GAGNOA and the large and medium-sized undertakings in the area (for instance, Mokta). In short, the vocational training which this centre seeks to provide is designed to produce good craftsmen for the villages and good manual workers for the local industries.

The first step was thus to study the wishes and needs of the villages and undertakings. But an effort is also being made to promote progress and social advancement by laying down - in agreement with the Town Planning Departments - a number of building standards (residential).

This is equally true with regard to agriculture (small implements). It would thus appear that this training centre is planning to provide more than an ordinary vocational training and in fact aspires to offer a comprehensive vocational and technical education.

The Gagnoa technical centre comprises three sections, covering the following trades:

- building
- wood-work
- iron-work

Each of these sections will train manual workers capable of carrying out simple tasks that have been carefully worked out technically and which both meet the needs of and are commensurate with the average financial resources of private persons or local authorities in the area. To achieve this purpose, its trainees undergo a practical and theoretical training which has nothing in common with the customary certificates of proficiency.

Thus a mason will learn something of rubblework, brickwork and reinforced concrete work, as well as how to erect a simple structure and roof a house. The joiner will learn to make doors and windows and simple furniture, and even to saw up timber for the village's needs. In general mechanics (ironwork), the intention is not to train highly skilled mechanics or fitters or boiler-makers, but workmen who are capable of keeping such things as motor vehicles, auto-cycles, bicycles, hulling machines, a Bernard engine or a water pump in good running order and also of shaping pipes and angle-iron, welding, drilling, assembling and the like.

Each trainee will attend general and specialized technological courses adapted to the requirements of the trade, and will also be taught how to prepare an invoice, an estimate and an order and in general how to run a small business.

If undertakings in the area have some special need (for instance, for a turner or a driller) the Technical Centre will provide suitable training for the worker or workers required, ensuring that it conforms as closely as possible to the wishes of the user, which of course implies the acquisition of such additional general and theoretical knowledge as may be deemed necessary by the Director of the Technical Centre.

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The empirical and thoroughly realistic approach of this Centre is again apparent in the method of recruitment. The Director's concern in recruiting is to ensure that he trains manual workers who will use their technical knowledge in the field in which they were intended to work. In other words, everything has to be

done - starting with recruitment itself - to make certain that the young men who are trained at the Centre do not leave their trade. It is well known that industrial technical training has constantly come up against this stumbling-block.

For this reason the Director of GAGNOA Technical Centre has organized recruitment in the following manner. At the cantonal level, the Council of Notables is instructed to nominate ten candidates from among the young men in the canton.

They choose for preference craftsmen who already know how to read and write, are interested in their trade, enjoy a good reputation and are permanently resident in the canton. The Director of the Centre, after he has made his own enquiries and consulted a psychologist-technician (in this instance the Director of the Department of Vocational Guidance, Research and Documentation at ABIDJAN), decides upon three candidates from each canton and so recruits thirty trainees for his Centre. So far there have been a few (two or three) cases of trainees not completing the course because of ill-health.

Contact is subsequently maintained with the Council of Notables and the village chiefs, who thus take an interest in what their "appointees" are learning.

The training course is planned as follows:

- full-time training at the Centre for nine months
- a period of three months spent in the villages doing actual jobs
- a further period of three months at the Centre
- environmental orientation - six months.

Proficiency examinations of the same type as those introduced for Trade (decree 135/ET of 29 April 1959) will be held upon completion of the course. The examinations have not yet been instituted but they certainly will be very shortly, under the provisions of article 2 of the above-mentioned decree, which states that "the nature of the proficiency examination for each trade shall be determined by the Minister for Technical Instruction, who shall draw up the syllabus for the examination and the relevant regulations".

The staff engaged in the training activities comprise in addition to the Director:

- 2 graduate teachers seconded from France (French technical assistance), one being assigned to the General Mechanics Section and the other to the Woodwork and Building Sections;
- 6 instructors selected from among young African holders of industrial certificates of proficiency with at least two years experience in a

trade; they are assigned two to a section according to the field in which they have specialized.

The lectures in the general education course are given by teachers from the GAGNOA senior elementary classes.

It is the graduate teachers' function to instruct the trainees on a full-time basis and to follow their progress in the villages (during the three months which they spend there) and during the six months' period of environmental orientation, in order to give them sound advice and, in case of need, find them work with private persons, the administration or missions.

But it is obvious that their activities will go beyond these limits and that the Centre, with its Director and graduate teachers, will provide the area with a permanent and regular technical assistance mission operating in the villages through craftsmen trained. Even in these early stages the trained craftsmen are not being cast empty-handed into the surrounding area. They will go with a set of tools - acquired partly at the Centre - with which they will have familiarized themselves during their training period. They will be able to return to the Centre later on to seek advice or, in exceptional circumstances, to do some special work requiring a machine-tool which is too costly for them to buy themselves and pay off.

For this purpose the Centre has a regular research department which is of course adapted to the needs of the region and the craftsmen who are undergoing training or plying their trade in the villages. Attention should also be drawn to the importance of the training of instructors, which is another of the Centre's aims. I have already referred, in connexion with the staff, to the six instructors, two attached to each section.

The GAGNOA Technical Centre plans to train not only craftsmen but also instructors who will eventually be responsible for industrial vocational training. The latter rank as assistant instructors in technical training, and are put on the establishment on completing a two-year probationary period and passing an examination.

The graduate teachers help them to fill out their vocational training and to add to the practical experience they have acquired in plying their trade and through direct experience of village life. It is their duty to prepare, under the supervision of the Director and the graduate teachers, textual material for teaching purposes and to undertake technical research adapted to the needs of the area and of the trainees, for whose supervision in the workshop and the field they are also responsible.

The training of instructors accordingly constitutes an essential element in the development of the GAGNOA Technical Centre and its firm establishment in the area. It also constitutes a vitally important step forward if other centres of the same kind are to be started in the Ivory Coast; and this will undoubtedly be necessary if the expectations of the rural populations are to be fulfilled.

The GAGNOA Technical Centre is equally realistic in its living-in system. The happy mean between village life and the "highly urbanized" boarding establishment has been successfully preserved. Every effort has been made to provide the trainee with living conditions which he will be able to recreate in the main when he returns to the village. In other words, the living-in system is planned to create an awareness among the trainees of what they need in the way of housing while providing them with the technical means to meet those needs cheaply.

The boarders' diet is very similar to the traditional village diet except that, when necessary, an effort is made to provide a better balance. One very important feature is that there is no staff, with the exception of a cook, to look after the boarders, and the dormitories (cubicles for ten), showers, toilets and dining-hall, in fact the entire premises, are kept in good order by the trainees themselves.

During the period May - July 1961 the trainees made certain interior improvements and added to the fixtures. A volley-ball pitch was laid out and a miniature-football table which had been salvaged somewhere was repaired and fixed up. Work on a swimming pool was begun and will be completed this year; it will provide practical experience in masonry and general mechanics, since it will be fed with rain water collected from the roofs by means of guttering and piping.

Appendix

SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL TECHNICAL CENTRES

AIMS

To meet the needs of rural populations and minor economic centres.

- Training and advanced training of workers capable of carrying out simple tasks that have been carefully worked out technically and which both meet the needs of and are commensurate with the average financial resources of private persons or local authorities in the area.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

Recruitment locally based on fitness to practise the future trade rather than on general knowledge.

- A simple all-round training of two years' duration based on an analysis of needs and alternating between the centre and the working sites.

- A living-in system based on self-discipline and self-service, making it possible for the trainees' personalities to develop in surroundings which are an improvement on their customary living conditions but only to the extent that they will be able to maintain the improvement subsequently.

- Technical and material assistance to the trainees after they have left the Centre.

- Regular research to establish and improve techniques which can be used locally.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- Establishment of similar centres located on a uniform geographical basis.

- Pilot role of the GAGNOA Centre in training staff who will be responsible for adapting activities to the local conditions in each area.

- Accordingly, strengthening of the teaching staff at GAGNOA, where the instructors are trained while teaching their trade and helping to work out new ideas in the research department.

ANNEX

PLAN FOR A TRAINING CENTRE FOR WOOD-WORKING CRAFTSMEN AT ABIDJAN

The built-up area of Abidjan with its two large districts of Treichville and Adjamé has a population of 140,000. Some 400 to 500 wood-work craftsmen are working in difficult conditions.

Very often the smallness of their premises, the rudimentary tools which they use, the high price of the wood for which they pay cash, force these craftsmen to produce articles which are either too costly or too cheap.

The industrialization of the large joiners' shops gives rise to competition which the craftsmen find it hard to meet as they are not equipped or trained to work systematically and rapidly.

The Government felt that in the case of this body of craftsmen a centre providing further training in wood-work would provide a means:

1. of selecting good craftsmen,
2. of improving and rationalizing working methods,
3. of acquainting the craftsmen with machine-work in order to increase productivity.

There is no doubt that this advanced training centre will make the craftsmen anxious to form co-operatives and to join a trade association.

SCHEME

SITE - at Treichville, on the Port-Bouet road.

Area - 3,800 sq. m.

Workshops - 935 sq. m (roofed)

Outbuildings - 140 sq. m.

2 apartments.

1 storehouse.

EQUIPMENT

2 circular saws

2 band-saws

1 cross-cutting saw

2 surface-planing machines

1 planing machine

- 2 vertical shapers
- 2 mortising machines
- 1 tenoning machine
- 1 Venetian-blind machine
- 1 lathe
- 1 sand-papering machine
- 1 drilling machine
- 1 band-saw sharpening machine
- 1 sharpening machine for mortising-machine chains
- 1 sharpening machine for planing-machine blades
- 1 millstone
- 1 mixer
- a large number of sets of tools - a stock of wood.