

Foundations in Industry

Following a major review of its industrial programme in 1993/94, the Secretariat has emphasised the development and implementation of projects with the primary aim of promoting the sustainable development of small states, creating an enabling environment for the growth of small and medium enterprises, including entrepreneurship development, and strengthening institutions. Particular attention is given to technology promotion, the development of micro-enterprises and involving more women in the process of industrialisation.

To create a supportive environment for investment, the Commonwealth Business Network, launched in 1993, strengthens the role of private business organisations by promoting investment, technology and help to small businesses. Working with the International Bureau of Chambers of Commerce and other business organisations, the Secretariat launched a pilot scheme to link up and create a site on the Internet for the Chambers of Commerce of Commonwealth developing countries.

Industrial activities are funded through the CFTC.

Entrepreneurship

Working with ministries and institutions, local development agencies, chambers of commerce and industry, and NGOs, the Secretariat helps identify emerging entrepreneurs and eco-friendly small businesses and provides practical assistance in making their ideas and opportunities become a reality. Such assistance lays the foundations for environmentally sustainable development where it must take root to be effective: at the community level.

Would-be entrepreneurs are assisted through training workshops which teach basic entrepreneurial skills and small business management. They

Assistance in improving entrepreneurship for small enterprises, such as this one in Ghana



HIMALAYAN PAPER SOLUTION

Experienced mountain guides or sherpas warn travellers in the Himalayas against cutting trees for firewood because it can lead to deforestation and soil erosion. Until a few years ago, however, the fruit growers of the Himalayan foothills chopped down pine and eucalyptus trees to make wooden boxes to package their fruit. They had done so for years and the fragile environment in one of India's most beautiful mountainous regions was being destroyed.

When the state government of Himachal Pradesh decided to modernise the fruit-packing industry, it did so with the help of the Secretariat. At the cost of £5 million, the state government established a modern plant to produce corrugated paper cartons as an alternative to the wooden boxes. These are made from recycled paper, jute waste, old cartons and bagasse (refuse products from sugar-making).

Providing practical advice and help for the factory fell to a group of CFTC experts. In 1996, they helped install state-of-the-art machinery from Japan, trained staff and helped improve the factory's operations and the quality and performance of its products. In particular, they advised on the computerisation of the stock control and data tracking system and suggested ways to cut wastage and costs and improve efficiency. When the first cartons produced were found unable to withstand certain weather conditions, the experts suggested improvements to the raw materials and came up with new designs.

Agro Industrial Packaging India Ltd (AIPI), as the plant is known, is now producing boxes for such international companies as Pepsi, Sony and Panasonic – as well as the fruit growers of the Himalayan foothills.



Recycled paper used to make cartons

are also exposed to other trends, such as those impacting on product design and marketing in small island economies, mostly dominated by tourism. Such projects have been implemented, for example, on the islands of Bequia and Union Island in the Grenadines in 1996, the outlying islands of The Bahamas in 1997 and the islands of the South Pacific in 1995 and 1996. About 100 entrepreneurs, most of them women, have benefited from this special type of assistance.

The Secretariat takes special care in addressing the needs of women entrepreneurs and projects promoted by women. This is largely accomplished through close consultations with local women's bureaux and the ministries responsible for women's affairs. Through these consultations, the Secretariat has been able to help identify and implement several investment projects of special interest to women either as individual entrepreneurs, as members of women's co-operative groups, or as employees.

The Secretariat also recognises that many women face special problems when they wish to borrow money to start businesses. It therefore designs programmes to help them access credit. In May 1996, for example, one of the first Secretariat-sponsored activities in Cameroon was a training programme on the management of credit schemes for rural women entrepreneurs in Africa. This attracted 29 participants from 12 Commonwealth African countries and was co-sponsored with the International Labour Organisation and the Pan-African Institute of Development in Buéa, Cameroon.

Small-scale Industry

Most of the Secretariat's development budget for improving industry goes into small- and medium-scale industries. Technical assistance has concentrated on improving support measures and eliminating the constraints on growth. This is done through business clinics and industrial opportunity surveys. Strategically, this means providing advisory services not only to foster growth, but also to source, adapt and transfer technology at the enterprise level.

Due to the nature of developing country economies, many of the Secretariat's projects, although relatively small-scale, make a significant impact on individual countries. In Brunei Darussalam, for example, the Secretariat provided assistance to transfer appropriate technology, know-how and practical training to increase the productivity of the country's handloom sector.

In November 1996, the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Samoa launched a fully operational and sustainable sewing machine repair facility, revamped with assistance from the Secretariat. The new facility trains people not only in repair skills but also in small business skills, and assists women entrepreneurs in the local garment industry in particular. It will create wealth, promote private sector industry and help the country meet its own economic needs.

Most industries can be classified as either labour or skills intensive. In the category of labour intensive industries, the Secretariat has assisted the small-scale garment manufacturing industries in St Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, St Lucia, and Antigua and Barbuda. The results of this effort have been improved product diversification, increased productivity, better quality, less wastage of raw materials, improved designs and expanded markets, among other things.

In the skills intensive areas, the Secretariat has assisted foundry projects in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. In Trinidad, the Secretariat

is helping a local foundry and the University of the West Indies' Faculty of Engineering to rationalise and improve the quality and consistency of batch melts. Two lecturers from the university were also sent on exposure visits to foundries in Britain, to gain working experience. These skills are being passed on to many future students of engineering.

In Southern Africa, the Secretariat has assisted the Government of Swaziland in developing a cost-effective strategy for the use of renewable energy resources as part of an integrated national energy strategy. It has also assisted in evaluating indigenous ceramic raw materials and developing a project for processing these raw materials into ceramic products such as tableware.

Capacity-building

In tandem with other projects, the Secretariat is increasingly providing support for the development of institutional capacity for industrialisation. In this regard, it has assisted in developing the capacity of the African Regional Industrial Property Organisation (ARIPO), based in Zimbabwe, to provide efficient services to its 14 member countries through computerisation. The Secretariat has also helped introduce a computerised cost-control system of Activity Based Costing in Jamaica and assisted in developing Uganda's capability to produce rubber latex and process it into moulded rubber goods.



Environmental-friendly ... the Secretariat helped develop this rubber reclamation project in Kenya



In the Pacific island countries of Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, assistance has been provided to develop local human resource capabilities within the Ministries of Trade and Industry.

In Tanzania, assistance has been extended to the Ministry of Industries and Trade to formulate an overall policy framework for the development of the micro and small enterprise subsector, establish data collection and monitoring systems and redefine the role of the Ministry from regulating and controlling to facilitating the growth of the industry sector.

The Secretariat's industrial development programme works to create an enabling environment for the growth of small and medium enterprises