

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY 2****Koma Rock Housing Project, Nairobi, Kenya – Humama Women's Group**

If under-resourced or unskilled groups are to succeed in formal markets, attention must be paid to them. This was highlighted by our experiences in Kenya working on the Koma Rock housing project which started in 1989.



In 1989 Parry Associates (at this time working through an arm of a daughter company known as ITW Kenya) began work on a project organised by the Kenya Building Society (KBS), financed mainly by the Commonwealth Development Corporation to provide housing for Kenya's rising numbers of middle-income families. The project was implemented through the conventional employment of building professionals and contractors, where ITW Kenya (whose work is now under our name: JPM Parry & Associates) was a subcontractor. As a subcontractor we then became a bridge by further sub-contracting the manufacture and laying of tiles to the Humama Women's Group for 75% of the work and to other small producers for the balance.

Many of the members of the women's group had multiple children who were dependent solely upon them. So the women not only needed a strong income, but jobs that were within close proximity of their homes and that allowed for their childcare responsibilities. City jobs were therefore difficult to maintain, and most women previously had to rely on street trading.

Prior to the start of the project 10 women from Humama were trained in the use of Parry equipment at Karen. Initially the less skilful women objected to being paid less than their more productive sisters, but this was resolved by distributing the profits equally between all the members and the operators (about half the

membership), earning on piece work. Two members of Humama received training at our workshops in Cradley Heath, and with their extensive training they headlined the tile making project and ran a business with a turnover of Ksh 100,000 a week – far greater than the Ksh 350 a month that an individual would have been lucky to earn through street trading.

The KBS Project Director viewed the delivery of Parry fibre-concrete roofing as an innovation that might fail and had specified alternative roofing should ITW Kenya fail to deliver. Even so ITW Kenya carried the financial risk of damages for non-performance. A separate innovation, the construction by another subcontractor of walls with stabilised soil was abandoned. In ensuring that delivery schedules were met, ten months from start to finish of the first 1,700 houses, ITW Kenya provided workshop premises, raw materials and management to its subcontractors including Humama. Material costs were recovered when the products were delivered and Quality & Progress was monitored daily.



Against tough professional competition the women's co-operative, from the shanty settlement Mathare Valley, amazed government officials with their success in providing roofing tiles of correct quantity and quality on time. The tile making project which was launched with a grant and an equipment loan actually made a profit, and this money was used to support a series of Mathare welfare programmes which the women have established including childcare, delinquent youth, health and mental care, and family planning.

A key person in the formation of Humama was Ingrid Munro, then Director of the African Housing Fund, a satellite of Shelter Afrique. Ingrid now works in a micro-finance and welfare society with more than 35,000 members, called Jamii Bora. She is now using her experience of Koma Rock to develop a township at Kaputei using Parry equipment. The Humama Women's Group is still producing roofing products, and their business is very successful.