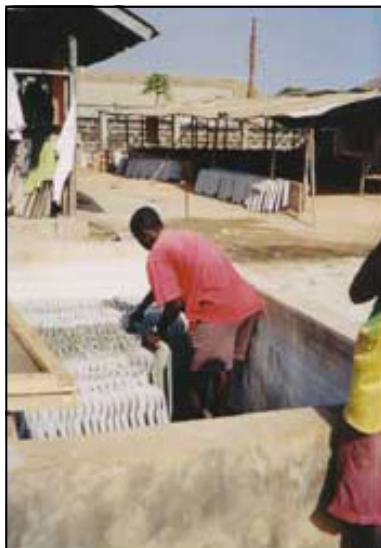


INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY 5
Affordable Housing Programme, Sierra Leone

Between 1998 and 2001 the Commonwealth Secretariat sponsored a large project in collaboration with JPM Parry & Associates Ltd in Sierra Leone which targeted a number of issues arising in the country during and after the civil war. There were many issues - reviving a war-torn economy; repairs and reconstruction of damaged buildings and destroyed homes; and rehabilitation of ex-combatants who found themselves released into a sea of unemployment, including many disabled soldiers and civilians injured in the course of the war. The positive results achieved by the project were appraised earlier in 2004 on the instruction of His Excellency Don McKinnon, the Commonwealth's Secretary General.

**Development of affordable housing construction industry**

The mass displacement of people and destruction of property during the rebel war left an acute shelter problem. To resolve this the first phase of the project aimed to establish building technology suitable for mass affordable housing in Sierra Leone, demonstrating techniques for the production of bricks, stabilised soil blocks, roofing, floor and wall tiles, and other building products. This first phase covered the Western area of Sierra Leone and was implemented by six indigenous enterprises.

Re-integration of ex-combatants and the war-disabled into the community

Besides the civilians and soldiers who had suffered horrific injuries in the course of war which left many permanently disabled, there were also the child soldiers: kidnapped and forced into conflict. In order to rehabilitate such people and reintegrate them into a functional society these people needed livelihoods and a sense of belonging, not to mention a sense of self-worth. For this reason phase two of the project centred on the community participatory role, establishing small clusters of small building manufacturing businesses at chiefdom and district levels in the Northern, Eastern and Southern provinces. Training and equipment was provided and targeted towards ex-combatants, unemployed youth and women.

**Reviving a war-torn economy**

The two phases of the project combined together have created new businesses and economic opportunities, generated a competitive local supply base and employed over 30,000 persons in small businesses. In short, the Affordable Housing Programme has established a strong commercial niche which will help to stabilise the economy, successful at the local level and impacting on the national level.