



Lettie Stuart Pottery Center and School

The employment situation in Sierra Leone is immensely challenging, especially for young people, with an estimated 70% of Youth being underemployed. In addition, there is a huge skill gap in young people and a real lack of practical training in various disciplines.

Unemployment amongst young people has been the case for a long time, and back in the 1990s, Sierra Leone Adult Education Association (SLADEA) conceived the idea to establish and operate a non-profit Pottery training center. The aim was to create an alternative career opportunity for young people alongside traditional skills such as Metal Work, Masonry, Tailoring/Dress Making, and carpentry.

The raw materials needed to operate such a center are available in abundance in Sierra Leone, and a considerable number of unemployed young men and women are always on the lookout for viable options for productively using their energies.

However, the eleven-year civil war affected the establishment of the center severely, and when it ended in 2002, all initial investments were ruined. By 2005 SLADEA was able to commission a study to ascertain the viability of a professional Training and Production Center for Pottery and Ceramics in Campbell town, Waterloo. In short, the review was very favorable for establishing the center, claiming amongst other things that pottery had a traditional foothold in Sierra Leone, that the market for pottery was there and that young people could be introduced to the skill through an organized training or apprenticeship.

In the following years, SLADEA managed to receive financial support from various agents to equip and operate the center as well as to give training to 20 young people. However, the training period was over three years, and with no financial support to the trainees, they dropped out one after the other, and only four finished the training. However, no sustainability plan was drawn up for the running of the center after the initial funding ended.

Two of the potters that completed the training kept working at the center but weren't capable of maintaining the center and slowly it started to deteriorate.

Through Aurora's [Sweet Salone project](#), we got to know the center and the two potters who worked there. Our designer teams were very interested in working with them and saw the potential. However, we soon realized that they did not have the means to work on large orders, and especially the Kiln was slowly crumbling down and not able to sustain substantial activity.

Therefore, together with SLADEA, we decided to refurbish the Pottery Center and to conduct professional training for young people to become professional potters. Part of the project is to create a business plan for the center so that its sustainability can be guaranteed once the project between Aurora and SLADEA finishes.

The project is estimated to last for 22 months with the training program going on for 18 of these 22 months.

Aurora finances the training and all refurbishment of the center, as well as the running costs during the time of the project. Aurora also provides professional assistance. Aurora facilitates the visits of professional potters from abroad who assist with the training, formulating the curriculum, re-organizing the center, improving the quality of the goods and who build a new Kiln for the center to be able to increase their productivity.

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