



In March of 2003, Wood-Mizer Missions Coordinator Dave Rowzer took a trip to what the United Nations has deemed the poorest country in the world. Sierra Leone has long been host to uprisings and sudden shifts in government. The western African country has just emerged from a ten-year civil war, but the people are years behind other nations in terms of basic infrastructure and human comforts.



Rowzer and the World Hope International missionaries brought compassion and knowledge to the Sierra Leonean people in hopes of improving the local infrastructure, and teaching more economic self-reliance. The second part of this equation involved the donation of a Wood-Mizer portable sawmill. Rowzer's task was to teach the locals how to use it and benefit from it.

Accompanying Rowzer on this mission were Bob Rogers, Jack Dillon, and Joe Estes. Rowzer recalls, "Each of us had different responsibilities. Bob was lost in the water well project and other logistics, Jack drove the newly-arrived 'tipper' (was the 'go-for' guy), and Joe was the photographer." Rowzer was asked by World Hope International to go along and train the national workers on the sawmill and related operations.

Rowzer began his duties by sorting through a mountain of boxes, trying to locate sawmill parts and related items. He then assembled the LT15 portable sawmill and trailer package. (The trailer package allows you to haul the mill from one location to another.)



Rowzer instructed the local mill operators on how to properly set up, maintain, and prepare the mill for transportation. This was followed by a lesson in sawmill alignment. Rowzer then began the task of teaching sawmill operation, which meant teaching novice sawyers the intricacies of log handling and cutting. This involved teaching the crew how to figure construction lumber sizes. Rowzer also assembled the automatic CBN blade sharpener and toothsetter, and taught the crew how to use it.



Rowzer drew up plans for a solar kiln and taught some basics about stacking lumber for drying. In Sierra Leone, air-drying is most commonly used. While selling lumber is one way to make money, the locals were more concerned with using the lumber to meet the tremendous need for school desks and many building repairs throughout their district.

Rowzer says, "I feel these men are capable of managing the sawmill business well enough to pay their workers and other expenses, plus meet the demands of the district for lumber."

After the crew was trained on the sawmill, they were averaging 600 board feet per day, in mostly four and six-foot logs. Rowzer says cutting them took nearly twice the time as it would have for the same board feet cutting eight to twelve foot long logs.



Rowzer says, "If they are desperate for lumber, they can cut the short ones, but the normal sizes that will be cut in the future will be over eight feet."

He adds, "I told them that if they could average between 800 to 1000 board feet per day, they should feel satisfied, given the normal circumstances and conditions they face in their operation."



After decades of riots, looting, and unrest, at last some Sierra Leoneans have the tools needed to rebuild. The Wood-Mizer sawmill, Dave Rowzer, and the missionaries of World Hope International have all contributed to the ongoing recovery. Rowzer believes the trip was a success.

"I believe we all left with most of the major objectives accomplished. Since we only had nine working days, I wished that the time could have been a bit longer so we could work alongside the nationals and help refine their new job skills a bit more."

To learn more about World Hope International, visit their web site: www.worldhope.org

