

By Anthony Kiganda

Davis and Shirliff: Celebrating 70 years of success

With a long history of successful projects behind it, Davis and Shirliff has established itself as the Region's leading Water and Energy equipment supplier by paying close attention to both the diversity of its offering and commitment to clients and partners.

With roots dating back more than half a century, Davis and Shirliff has grown to be the region's leading Water and Energy equipment supplier. Since its inception in 1946, the company has grown continuously and built a reputation for quality and professionalism. As the Group celebrates its 70th anniversary, it boasts of a long journey that has been full of success.

Today, Davis and Shirliff is a modern and innovative company that has been crafted by its long history with a firm focus on the future. The product range has over the years expanded with a focus on six market segments – Water Pumps, Boreholes, Swimming Pools, Solar equipment, Water Treatment and Power Generation.

Though much equipment is imported, the Company is a significant manufacturer making fibre-glass products, its distinctive yellow pool filters being especially popular, as well as fabricated steel items and it also assembles a wide range of water related equipment

With a diverse customer base and a large product offering, Davis and Shirliff has emerged as a true leader in its field. Over the years, the firm has developed a wide customer base that includes the public sector, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture and the building industry and of course many private clients. Its core strength lies in its experience and competence coupled with its highly professional workforce.

"1993 was a significant year for Davis and Shirliff. The economic liberalisation in Kenya that year was a major catalyst for the company's rapid growth. It was also the year that Pedrollo products were introduced," says Alec Davis the group chief executive of Davis and Shirliff.

"These two developments enabled a distribution strategy to be introduced as supply constraints were removed and also establishment of the branch network, which is now so important for the Group."

Between 1995 and 2000 subsidiaries in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda were established. Also the pump business grew hugely with Pedrollo and new solar and power generation activities established. Key to the powerful story behind Davis and Shirliff is innovation and technology, a recent example being the establishment of a control panel manufacturing unit with a capacity of over 1000 panels a year.

"Our current focus is on leadership through technology. As a result, many new interesting products have been introduced including locally manufactured Reverse Osmosis and Ultra Filtration plants, variable speed pump sets, remote monitoring controllers and Solar power generating systems," reveals Davis.

Service is another important priority for the Davis & Shirliff Group and its large vehicle fleet is a common sight on Kenya's roads. The Company is also proud of its IT resources with a centralised ERP system that is used regionally, all system development being done in-house. Other functions include a highly resourced Supply division to handle the Group's up to KShs1Bn stockholding, which also carries out clearing, and a well-resourced training department that trains both staff and customers. A recent innovation has been live streaming so training sessions are relayed throughout the Group.

Major initiatives have included a complete re-development of the Industrial Area site and the expansion into adjacent plots, the opening of subsidiaries and associate companies in Zambia, Ethiopia and South Sudan, the establishment of a branch network with new ones about to open in Ongata Rongai, Narok, Kitui,

Mombasa Downtown, Jinja and Lusaka Downtown, introduction of the successful Dayliff pump range as well as several new international suppliers including Lorenz, Kohler and DAB and a huge expansion of the product range. There has also recently been considerable premises investment including a new building at Mombasa to support its Coast large business and a new office building at its Dundori Rd HQ which will include canteen and Training facilities.

The success story of Davis and Shirliff has been based on commercial focus, manageable ambition, consistency of ownership and, importantly, living the values of Quality, Integrity and 'Altiora Peto', which translates to embracing continuous change.

The other key factor that has created success story behind Davis and Shirliff is the harmonious staff relations and enormous staff commitment and motivation since the company's founding. This has been achieved by recruitment and training of consistently high caliber people and also by enlightened, generous and fair employment policies that have enabled people to reach their potential with rewarding jobs and enjoy a secure future.

After being at the helm of the firm as Group CEO for over 25 years several years, Alec Davis is retiring from executive responsibilities from the end of May 2016 to assume the role of Chairman handing over to his long-serving deputy David Gatende.

The company is also fortunate that the third generation Davis's, Edward and Henry, have joined the business, so continuity is assured. The Group continues to expand in product and markets and looks forward to keep serving the region with essential products that certainly improve peoples' lives and also being a several hundred million US\$ company by the end of the next decade.

The Group is also proud of being a key contributor to the Kenyan economy though the large tax payments it makes. It also boasts of major exports of its products to the surrounding countries and also the extensive training investment it has made that has benefited both the Company and also the wider regional water industry.

"Looking into the future, Davis and Shirliff will continue to grow through the contribution of its highly committed staff and also through constant innovation and investment to remain the market standard bearer. We have a very strong brand and a good business model and we face the many uncertainties of the future with great confidence," concludes Alec