



G SHANKERDAS & SONS

76 years and counting
for the Shankerdas family
success story

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THIRD GENERATION SUCCESS

Promotes Future
Sustainability



The Sierra Leonean family-run business is expanding and improving despite the ongoing power challenges in the country

Writer: Matthew Staff

Project Manager: James Smith

G Shankerdas & Sons (S.L.) Ltd has grown and expanded within the manufacturing sector in Sierra Leone since the early 1900s, but the entrepreneurial family business is still looking to diversify and improve 76 years on.

Developing and organically growing since 1939, the company began as a small trading company before transforming gradually, through acquisition and market migration, into a manufacturing organisation comprising numerous divisions.

Kishore is the current Shankerdas family member holding the Managing Director (MD) position, inheriting a role that had been held by his father previously and his grandfather initially.

With the executive board still comprising just him, his father, his mother and his own wife and children, Kishore is proud of how big the G Shankerdas & Sons (S.L.) Ltd business has become and is excited for the opportunities that still lie ahead.

“I joined the business in 1976 when I left college, when the business had about 20 members of staff. Today, we have more than a thousand,” he says. “Initially, we were filling wine in glass bottles and selling them, before we moved into plastics.

“Today, we have an alcohol division and our own distillery, as well as a plastic factory which manufactures plastic bags, agricultural bags and household items like buckets, basins

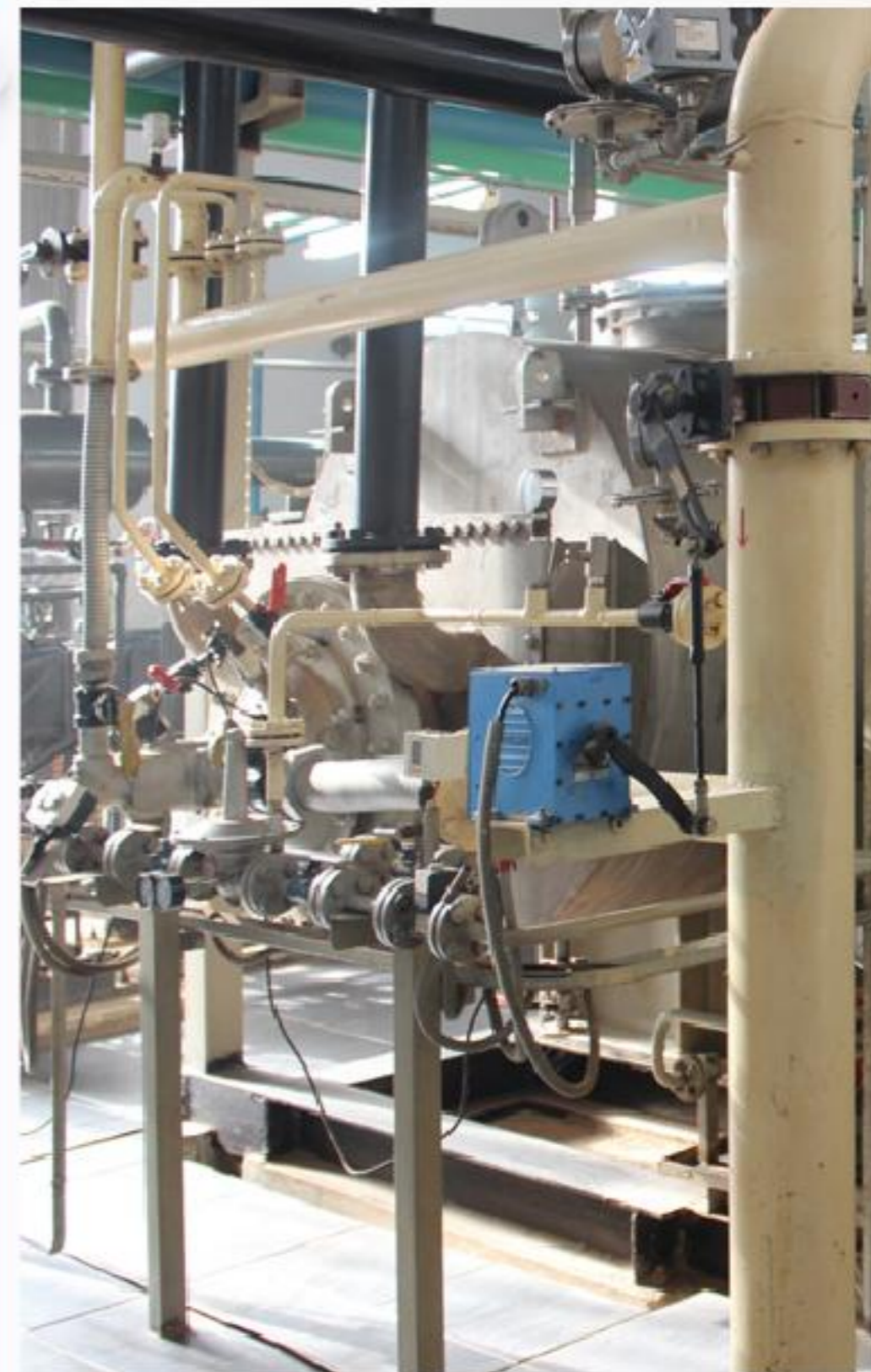
and hangers.”

The company also comprises a filling unit where it fills its own plastic bottles of mineral water to compliment its soft drink brands, and it even has the facility to manufacture larger items such as concrete pipes and water tanks.

Organic growth

Being a family run business has allowed G Shankerdas & Sons (S.L.) Ltd to make quick decisions in regards to business diversification over the years, identifying gaps in the market and growing organically, yet rapidly as a consequence.

“For example, when I joined the company we had a limited amount of glass bottles so our choice was to either form our own glass manufacturing unit or to go into plastics manufacturing, so we quickly started manufacturing our own plastic bottles,” Kishore explains. “From there, we started making plastic bags



The company changed its manufacturing material from

Glass to Plastic

so invested in some extruders, and from there we moved into household items, and so on.

“It has all been a gradual, organic growth rather than a big bang theory.”

This philosophy of active investment holds true to this day, with the business upgrading its machinery and equipment on a yearly basis, no matter what the fiscal situation is.

“Every year we expand. Whatever our capital, and margins, and profits, we expand,” Kishore continues. “For instance, I recently travelled to India to a plastic trade fair in Gujarat, Plast India 2015, to see what machines I can buy to fit in with what the company needs at the moment.”

As far as 2015 is concerned, the company is looking into providing a better economy of scale for its core products, and especially within its plastics manufacturing operations.

With extensive competition coming from imports and especially the

Chinese market, the need to find a differentiator is pivotal and Kishore believes this ongoing diversification and continuous improvement of machinery is key to that.

“Where we have the advantage is when someone needs a smaller order because we have the local presence to help cater more quickly for these people,” the MD notes. “We also have an advantage in things like water tanks, which can be expensive to import, so we do have the better economy of scale with products like this and do very well there.”

Socially responsible

Maintaining a more sustainable local focus within the company has been a staple requirement pivotal to G Shankerdas & Sons’ success, and this is currently adhered to through a number of strategies; whether it’s its local farming presence across 500 acres of land to produce its own



Kishore Shankerdas Biography

Representative for the Government of Japan as Honorary Consul-General of Japan to Sierra Leone for the past 29 years

Honorary Paramount Chief of Koya Rural District

Past president of Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (2000/2002)

Past president of Rotary Club of Freetown (2000/2001)

Chairman of the University of Sierra Leone Development Fund (since 1993)

Current President of the Fourah Bay College Alumni Association

Director, Aureol Insurance Co. Ltd. (AIC)

Director, United Bank of Africa (UBA)

Former Director of Sierra Leone Ports Authority (2008/2010)

Order of the Rising Sun (awarded by the Emperor of Japan, 2007)

Member of the Order of Rokel (awarded by the Government of Sierra Leone, 1989)

Commander of the Order of the Republic of Sierra Leone (awarded by the Government of Sierra Leone, 2013)

ingredients, or its products’ influence on the wider community, including its BEETA Cola offering which has been in high demand recently thanks to its immune system-building attributes in light of the Ebola crisis.

“We always see what we can best do to help the community around us, either through our products or the corporate social responsibility activities we are involved in,” Kishore states.

“For example, we have recently built three or four bridges to aid transport in the area, and we have an ongoing strategy giving scholarships to children in need.”

G Shankerdas & Sons has built numerous partnerships with both local and national authorities to further impact the country in a positive way, and there is a similar feel-good feeling spread internally, through the company’s local hiring emphasis and subsequent up-skilling ethos, and its similarly local supply chain approach.

Kishore adds: “We have had some staff with us for decades because we look after them and make sure they get what is theirs and that they are happy.

“We also try and go for local business partnerships where possible to keep this local focus, before looking outside to source materials.”

Sustainable future

Another example of the business’s positive impact in Sierra Leone and specifically the Freetown area occurs in relation to its relationship with a nearby school, with the business sharing its generator-powered electricity on a need-to-use basis, for free.

This addresses the biggest challenge stunting the full potential of G Shankerdas & Sons at present as Kishore explains: “The thing is, we need backup generators because of the power and electricity problems in Sierra





G Shankerdas & Sons has a local hiring emphasis and up-skilling ethos

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Leone which make us inefficient.

“If we had sufficient electricity and were assured this, then our plant could grow from a 1,000 to a 3,000 strong workforce. The capacity and capability is there but the only constraint to progressing further is the electricity problem.”

To counteract this challenge, the company has formed a partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency to provide a plant for used plastic waste, and to encourage the subsequent recycling of said waste. This will not only encourage a more sustainable production cycle, but will also help in generating electricity

“We also try and go for local business partnerships where possible to keep this local focus, before looking outside to source materials”

through alternative methods.

“We should be establishing this over the next 12-18 months, while we are also planning on buying new machinery within our plants to increase capacity even further,” Kishore concludes. “With many of our machines, all we have to change is the mould to get a new product, but with our water tanks especially, we hope to increase our capacity from 8,000 litres to as much as 15,000 litres over the next year or so.

“We always try to keep an eye on industry trends and find new areas that we can take advantage of moving forward.”



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82/88 Kissy Dockyard

P. O. Box 369

Freetown

Sierra Leone

Tel: 00232 77 714333|07796 768167

enquiries@shankerdas.sl

www.shankerdas.net