

# East African brand leader

By **VIMAL SHAH**

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**VIMAL SHAH**

holds a BSc degree in Business Administration and Finance from United States International University in Nairobi. He has won many awards including the Moran of the Order of the Burning Spear (MBS) by the President of Kenya in recognition of his contribution to national development, as well the most respected Chief Executive Officer in East Africa award in 2002. He is a much sought after business speaker and has lectured at the Harvard Business School where BIDCO has been developed into a case study. He is also an active member of Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria.

**B**IDCO was established in 1985 primarily as a manufacturing organisation, with marketing as a support function. Over the intervening years BIDCO has grown in leaps and bounds and established a strong presence both locally and within east and central Africa. The group is active in fourteen countries and in addition to its base in Kenya exports its brands to Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Zambia, Malawi, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zanzibar and Somalia.

Strong marketing and technologically advanced manufacturing and distribution systems have enabled the company to achieve success. BIDCO produces high quality, popular products with a vision of becoming the market leader throughout Africa by 2030. We believe that the greatest asset to any business is the customers. We are therefore committed to winning our customers loyalty to BIDCO products forever.

We remains focused on rising to the challenges of meeting and exceeding customer's needs. Our aim is not only to ensure customer satisfaction, but their loyalty as well. As a truly customer focused organisation, our belief is 'The Customer is King.' We plan to achieve this by offering our customers reliable services and quality brands at the most affordable prices.

The company has been growing steadily over the years. In 1998, we acquired the Elianto unit from Unga Group Ltd which was later expanded by over four hundred percent to meet the increasing demand for the brand in the region. In 2001 we moved into Tanzania and started BIDCO Oil & Soap Ltd in Dar-es-Salaam. This marked the entry of Bidco into one of Africa's fastest growing markets. Since then, the company's market share has grown steadily, especially in the laundry bar soaps and edible oils market segments.

BIDCO demonstrated its prowess in 2002 when the company acquired leading brands in East Africa from Unilever. We have maintained all these brands with the same quality and consumer satisfaction and the acquisition of the edible oil business from Unilever bolstered our goal to be a dominant force in the region. Unilever was then the largest player in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in the region.

Our willingness to embrace and adapt to new realms of state of the art technology has kept us well ahead of the rest. This is because we are aware of the importance

of technology for any meaningful future development and efficient management in production processes.

In 1998 BIDCO networked all its locations through VSAT. By 1999 BIDCO was the only company of its kind in the region with fully integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Intelligent Resource Planning (IRP) systems. In the same year 1999 we became the first sub-Saharan, edible oil processing company outside of South Africa to be awarded the ISO 9002 certification by the Bureau Veritas Quality International of Geneva, Switzerland

The company is socially responsible and always has the interest of the community at heart. The organisation is committed to ensuring that its operations and activities are not responsible for any adverse impact on the environment or to the local communities in which it operates. Modern packing facilities ensure that all our products are hygienically packed into fully recyclable quality packing materials.

BIDCO also promotes the growth of our local farmers. The company runs a seed crushing plant in Nakuru, Kenya, at the Elianto plant, where we work with 5,000 farmers. We guarantee to buy all their sunflower and Soya beans at the best market rates. BIDCO's purpose is to serve daily customer needs to enhance Happy Healthy Living by Branding Transforming, Distributing the Goodness of Mother Nature.

Bidco Oil Refineries Ltd is already a leading marketer and distributor of edible oils, fats, soaps, margarine and detergents in east and central Africa with three units in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Currently BIDCO's products are marketed in 14 African countries. The group's strategic locations and excellent products support new market developments and this has evolved into well defined distribution chains in Africa. The company has a vision of attaining at least over 51 per cent market share in each of the African markets it enters and eventually attaining number one status in Africa.

Some of the world class brands produced and sold by the group include the two super brands Kimbo and Elianto as well as other leading brands such as Golden Fry, SunGold, Olive Gold, Soya Gold, Bahari fry, Chipsy, Cowboy and Mallo. Our margarines Biddy's and Gold Band are also very popular in Africa. Laundry soap brands include the Star Range, Kuku, Tiger, Msafi, Mshindi and Bull as well as NURU multipurpose soap