

African greenfield leader

By **ANKUSH SHAH**

GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, SUMARIA



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is the Group Director of Finance for the Sumaria Group of companies. A fourth generation Sumaria family member, he has been with the Group full time for two years and was previously involved for several years as a board member. Prior to his current position, he worked in the asset management and investment banking industries in London, focusing on event-driven investing strategies and mergers & acquisitions. He holds a Masters degree in Economics and Philosophy from the London School of Economics and obtained his first degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Balliol College, Oxford.

Sumaria is one of the leading private corporations in east and central Africa, encompassing businesses in consumer goods, manufacturing, agro-processing and management services. Established in the 1940s, Sumaria today is recognised as one of the most respected corporate brands in East Africa, with a presence in Europe and elsewhere. Today we have businesses throughout East Africa, as well as Mozambique and India. We have been able to grow in this manner by following our seven core values of Trust, Respect, Integrity, Passion, Humility, Excellence and Teamwork.

Sumaria is first and foremost an expert in African greenfield projects – almost every sector we have entered has been done as a greenfield, often in a country and industrial sector that is new to us. These projects have usually been done with the help of our professional management teams, and we often bring in technical experts to aid our entry into new sectors.

In manufacturing, Sumaria has a depth of technical and managerial expertise, a reputation for reliability and a sharply defined business focus, which has transformed the organisation into a modern, highly competitive supplier of plastics, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods to the regional and global markets. We integrate innovative solutions to achieve world class manufacturing and service standards, incorporating international best business practices such as Gemba Kaizen and the Balanced Scorecard.

Sumaria also plays a strong role in uplifting the standard of living of the communities in which its individual companies operate. One of our core projects involves changing the lives of street children in Dar es Salaam, by providing housing, education and vocational training, mentoring and health care. We currently have over 80 ex-street children in our care. Other projects include supporting a school for the blind, the Ocean Road Cancer Institute, Kurasani orphanage and CCBRT.

Over the last 50 years Sumaria has developed a diverse portfolio and both grown and consolidated into a regional leader in plastics, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods. Sumaria's standing is further underpinned as one of the region's most sizeable private employers with about 3,000 employees.

Sumaria is a family business. We began under the auspices of Punamchand Keshavji Shah, who encouraged his sons to take on new challenges in

East Africa, away from Gujarat, India. Our company was then started by K. P. Shah (who later became an MP in pre-independence Kenya) and his six brothers originating in Kenya in the 1940s and spreading thereafter throughout the region and globally. Today, Sumaria's headquarters are based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and the company's primary shareholding still remains within four generations of the Sumaria family – the first member of the fourth generation joined the business in 2009.

Although we are a family business, our enterprises are managed by professional managers and technical experts. The role of the family members is largely strategic planning, investments and divestments, in addition to playing an active role on the boards of our companies. Many of our businesses are in partnership with others. Indeed, our family structure means that we need to excel at working in partnership – for that is exactly what we do within Sumaria. Recent partnerships of note include with Aureos Capital, one of the leading emerging markets Private Equity firms, who have taken stakes and subsequently exited from two of our businesses (Sabuni Detergents and the Shelys Africa group); with Aspen Pharmacare, the largest pharma company in Africa (listed on the JSE), who took a stake in our pharmaceutical business in 2008; and with DPI Plastics (previously owned by Sasol and Group 5, now part of Dawn, listed on the JSE), with whom we formed a plastics JV in 2001.

Sumaria has enjoyed various accolades over the years, including being named one of the most respected companies in East Africa by PWC in both 2002 and 2003 (more recent recipients of this award include Kenya Airways, Zain, and MTN). Several of our group companies have won numerous highly coveted awards from the Confederation of Trade and Industry over the years, including Shelys Pharmaceuticals which won the President's Award for Manufacturer of the Year in Tanzania. Nyanza Bottling Company has won the "Gold" award for quality from Coca-Cola several times, and our Roto Moulding unit has won awards for outstanding achievement from trade associations. One of our companies has also been awarded 2 prestigious awards from the Tanzania Revenue Authority for the highest degree of tax compliance and contribution. Most of our companies are ISO Certified, many of them the first to be so in their sector for the countries they operate in. **E**