



DAGAHELY REFUGEE CAMP  
SOLAR WATER PUMP INSTALLED  
AT DAGAHELY REFUGEE CAMP  
AT DADAAB KENYA

# AFRICAN WATERS, KENYAN SUN

Sustainable Business Magazine speaks with David Gatende, Managing Director of Davis & Shirliff, about how the water and energy solutions company is working to support a progressive vision for East Africa.



GROUP CEO OF DAVIS & SHIRTLIFF,  
MR DAVID GATENDE.

**Davis & Shirliff** was started as a modest business by two British soldiers in 1946, shortly after leaving the army following World War Two. Eddie Davis and Dick Shirliff chose to start new lives in Kenya and, together, created a company that focused on water supply solutions in Nairobi through the provision and maintenance of water pumps. These pumps have remained the company's core business. In 1965, not long after Kenyan independence, the company began a relationship with Danish stainless steel pump manufacturer Grundfos that has continued

to this day; in 1971, a similar long-term relationship started with Australian brand Davey. The company also provides its own brand of affordable pumps under the name Dayliff.

Today, however, Davis & Shirliff are present in more than just the water pump industry segment. In total, the group is active across six segments: The supply, installation, and maintenance of water pumps; equipment specification and maintenance of boreholes; maintenance of swimming pools; supply, installation, and maintenance of solar power arrays; water treatment equipment; and tradi-

tional power generators. These six segments can be pared down into two sectors, summed up in the group's strapline: "Providing water and energy solutions for Africa."

Great success has been achieved during decades of the group's life and today they boast over 50 offices across East Africa. From Zanzibar, Tanzania, in the east to Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo, in the west; from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in the north to Livingstone, Zambia, in the south: Davis & Shirliff are present in eight countries. The group has been a family affair throughout its existence with Eddie's son, Alec, and grandsons, Edward and Henry, holding important positions, this continuity providing an important sense of lineage and tradition. Alec Davis bought out his partner and became managing director in 1990 and was succeeded in 2016, on the group's 70th anniversary, by David Gatende when Alec Davis became Group Chairman.

## WORKING FOR KENYA

Although a commercial business, the work Davis & Shirliff undertake is often closely



VIEW OF DAVIS & SHIRTLIFF STAFF  
OUTSIDE THE HEADQUARTERS.

tied to the progress and development of Kenya as a whole. This is best witnessed through their frequent humanitarian projects in conjunction with the Kenyan government and with NGOs.

In 2015, for example, they undertook a project for the Rural Electrification Authority

to provide 34 schools in two counties with solar power generators. This was to make good on the recently elected President's campaign promise to improve education by bringing laptops to every primary school in the country. Meanwhile, in 2016, Davis & Shirliff worked with the United Nations ▶

DAVIS & SHIRTLIFF EXECUTIVE TEAM.



THE OVERALL VISION IN BOTH THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM FUTURE FOR DAVIS & SHIRTLIFF IS TO CONTINUE EXPANDING THEIR FOOTPRINT.



SAMARITAN'S PURSE  
SOLAR WATER PUMPING PROJECT FOR THE SAMARITAN'S  
PURSE HUMANITARIAN AID ORGANISATION FOR 3  
BOREHOLES IN YIDA SOUTH SIDAN

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to transform five traditional boreholes inside the refugee camp in Dagahaley into solar-powered pumps. Now completed, they provide more than 87,000 refugees with clean and safe drinking water.

Supplying to and working in some of the driest and poorest parts of East Africa means Davis & Shirliff play an important role in improving basic standards of living for many people. David Gatende, Chief Executive of the Group, divulges further: "When you talk about development in sub Saharan Africa, it really changes people's lives. Kids here, when they go to school, they can be told – especially in remote areas – that before they start studying they have to go and fetch water. When water is available right there, though, they have more energy and time to commit to studying."

"There are also important health benefits. Many diseases are waterborne but by using our treatment equipment it is possible to get rid of 100% of them. When people don't have good health or safe water, not only their health suffers but their productivity too. Providing these kinds of solutions using cheap or affordable energy

EMBU WATER PROJECT.  
SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLE PUMP INSTALLATION IN  
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is very significant because it helps people in many different ways. This is summed up in another tagline of ours: 'Improving people's lives'."

Davis & Shirliff is able to help even in wealthier urban areas. They supply a booster pump that improves water pressure throughout domestic water systems so that during periods of water rationing, such as droughts, people with the booster pump are still able to receive the water they need in their house. More than 4000 domestic pumps are sold every month. "I don't know how one would work out the number of people that have been impacted positively by our solutions over the seventy years but it must easily be in the tens of thousands if not in the millions," states Mr. Gatende.

**SUN UP**

Solar has become Davis & Shirliff's fastest growing segment, with 12% growth seen during 2016. There are numerous reasons for this but perhaps the two most impor-

tant are also symbiotic in nature. First, the location of Kenya along the equator means it sees consistent and steady sunlight year round. Second, the drop in cost from more than \$5 per watt just a few years ago to \$0.50 per watt today.

This means solar is not only a logical but an affordable solution for many throughout Kenya and East Africa, whether directly in school settings and, for example, from Population Services Kenya where the group have provided solar power to health



DAVIS & SHIRTLIFF PROVIDES WATER SOLUTIONS AT LONGINDO COMMUNITY IN NAMANGA



DAVIS AND SHIRTLIFF PROVIDES WATER SOLUTIONS AT NKAIMURUNYA PRIMARY SCHOOL IN ONGATA RONGAI

clinics, or in combination with water supply such as at UNHCR Dagahaley.

Equally important has been the adoption of solar in the group's own facilities. "We put a five kilowatt (kW) solar generator on our head office and connected it to our own grid," explains Mr. Gatende. "It doesn't feedback into the mains but reduces our energy bill by ensuring we pay

for 5kW less. In fact, it's 10kW because we also installed 5kW on another old building. Another 5kW generator was recently installed on a new building in Mombasa, bringing total energy reduction across the company to 15kW.

"Whenever we build new offices, such as the new one in Mombasa, there will always be a solar generator included. It is important

that within the company this technology is being used. We also have solar water heaters so when people use the taps and showers they can use the solar-heated water. There are solar street lights in our head office, and we are currently rolling them out around all the branches. All 50 will use solar lights combined with energy saving LED bulbs and variable speed water pump motors to try and reduce energy costs."

**SOFTWARE SUPERSTARS**

Embracing technology extends further than simply solar powered water heaters. Davis & Shirliff have a strong and committed IT department that includes a number of software programmers working on means of improving the quality and efficiency of the group's services. One example is the development of a vehicle queuing system similar to the app Uber that operates across the group's motor pool. Streamlining the booking and usage of the 100 vehicles used by more than 650 employees equates to important savings in time and fuel.

Mr. Gatende talks about some other tools developed by the IT department and used within the company: "Something we



BINGO  
21 BOREHOLES SUPPLIED AND INSTALLED BY DAVIS & SHIRTLIFF  
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D&S LODWAR BOREHOLE PROJECT.

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are very proud of is the customer relationship management tool. When you have 50 branches and 650 staff, with two-thirds of them out selling, tools are required to make it so that when they are in the field there are mobile apps for checking price lists, sending quotations, and connecting to the management system to give brief customer relationship reports in-situ that log directly into the system. All this is possible because we use Microsoft 365-based cloud computing."

"We use vehicle tracking so the motor pool is up on a screen in the Service department. This helps job ordering be much more streamlined. Our technicians have tablets and pads so they can file their reports and requisition things online, so that by the next morning they are ready to go to the next job. We consider ourselves IT savvy and invest a lot in these types of things."

One of Davis & Shirliff's three core values is 'Altiora Peto' Latin for 'I seek higher things' which is basically the desire to continuously improve what they are doing. The utilization of cloud computing and mobile apps goes a long way to accomplishing

this, enabling the group to maximize their time and physical resources.

**REDUCING THE WASTE-LINE**

The future for Davis & Shirliff will comprise of further efforts to improve sustainability through reduction of waste across the group. A recent move towards digitizing paperwork is one method by which this is being achieved, but many other options are being explored as well. Centralizing operations, so that staff and client finances all run through a single system, will be important in streamlining internal processes.

The overall vision in both the short- and long-term future for Davis & Shirliff, though, is to continue expanding their footprint. Mr. Gatende concludes: "We're just going to keep expanding so that we can have a bigger and bigger impact in the region. There are plans to go into new countries and in our existing countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia we will be opening branches in new counties. Regional expansion is a top priority for us, and we want to support this with the group shared services development. As we go farther and farther afield,

we need to be able to stay connected. Whenever we open a branch it just seems to take off, so we are very confident about our future."



SAMARITAN'S PURSE.