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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY
IN TANZANIA/

by

A. Mhombu*

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* Technician, Tanga Division, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

We regret that some of the pages in the microfiche copy of this report may not be up to the proper legibility standards, even though the best possible copy was used for preparing the master fiche.

It was not until the early 1960s that the plastics industries in Tanzania came into being, they started in a small way with mostly injection of moulding of consumer items and extrusion of L.D.P.E. film for the packaging industry. Progress was at first slow but has gained momentum during the last 5 years.

The materials used in the beginning being mainly L.D.P.E., H.D.P.E. and styrene with a total consumption rate of 500 to 700 tons per year. In 1966-67 companies began to extrude pipes both from H.D.P.E. and UPVC. Total consumption was 350 tons per year in this particular field of plastics and has grown to date to a capacity of 4,500 tons per year and is still increasing.

One is bound at this point to question such a growth rate in this particular field. This can be explained by the policy of the Government of Tanzania concerning water supply and irrigation schemes being given priority. Not only are larger quantities of pipe but also pipes of larger diameters required. For example in 1969 pipes of 90 to 110mm in diameter were the only sizes to be manufactured in any quantity the Max being 160mm. Today we are manufacturing pipes up to 400mm in diameter and it seems the demand may soon arise for 600mm pipes.

The main aim of the plastics industry has been to keep pace with these requirements, both in tonnage and dimension requirements for the customer and technological advancement for the industry. During the early stages of PVC pipe extrusion only granulate was used. This became both expensive and more modern equipment was more suited to dry blends. The industry then purchased new extruders and mixing equipment to reduce costs and increase output. During this same period local industry engaged in the processing of plastics began to co-operate more closely so eliminating duplicated efforts and over capacity of particular sizes. In this manner maximum utilization of existing machinery and equipment has been possible.

Our problems have not been few and early in 1973 materials became more difficult to obtain and prices began to increase as well. The oil crisis followed creating even more shortages and further price increases. Raw material manufacturers did their best to meet our demands and with this assistance we have managed to weather the storm.

Other sectors of plastics field have also expanded but not at the same rate as pipe extrusion. Injection moulding now covers a much wider field from small pharmaceutical containers to beer crates. Blow moulding likewise has increased from 1 litre to 4 litres capacity with a very large increase in custom moulding.

Film usage has increased particularly in the agricultural field and H.D.P.E. film has found opening in the food packaging companies. To meet the increase in capacity equipment that was earlier manufacturing PVC Pipes has been utilised to cope with the increase in demand for L.D.P.E. film but if the demand increases any further more up to date equipment will be required.

Polyurathan foam both rigid and flexible have increased in the field of application and quantity manufactured, its main usage still remaining that of furniture but much progress has been made in the field of thermal insulation.

Other industries not directly involved in plastic processing are increasing tonnage processed per year. For example the footwear industry is manufacturing more plastic shoes, shoe soles and shoes with direct or injection moulded soles than in previous years.

The louvre window manufacturers have now turned to plastics for window fittings. These have replaced steel counterparts due to being cheaper and more easy to handle and more suitable for the climate.

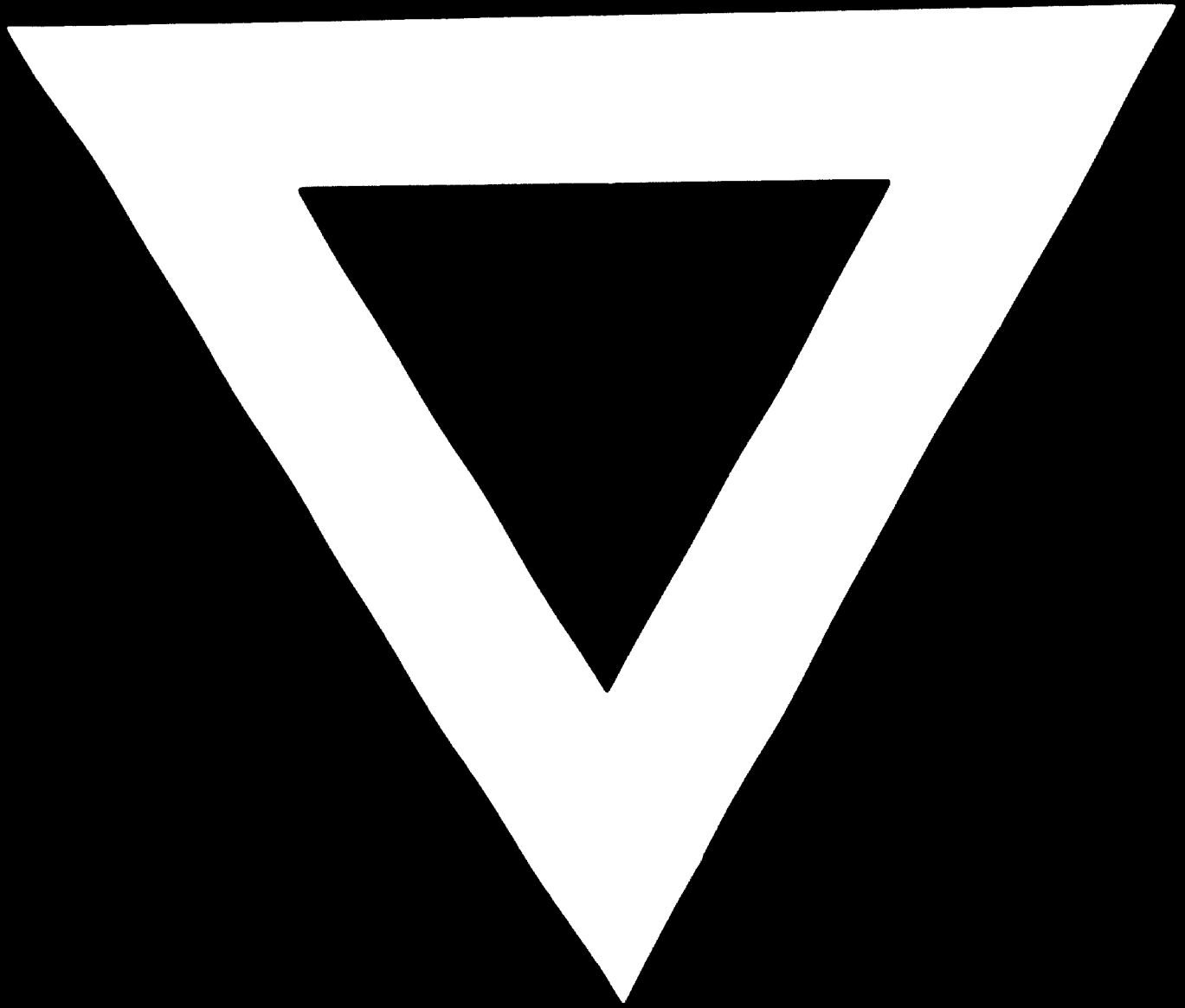
To go into great detail would not be an advantageous but it can be stated that the plastics industry in Tanzania has played an important part in the countries development and will continue to do so. The rate of expansion in any one field would be difficult to judge, but it is felt that pipe production will have still the greater rate of expansion followed by L.D and H.D.P.E. for agricultural purposes.

The rate of expansion has created many problems particularly with respect to the labour force. Still a great many people in Tanzania do not know what plastics are, skilled personnel are difficult to find. Training is carried out mainly on the job and with changing methods and increased outputs, this becomes difficult. All pipes manufactured must be to international standards and these standards must be upheld and progress maintained.

United Nations personnel at present in Tanzania has done a great deal in assisting the development of our plastics industry particularly in market research and local training programmes as well as in marketing and product planning. The courses offered overseas are of great assistance.

They not only offer the opportunity of studying specified subjects under concentrated conditions but also of observing what Plastic Industries in other countries are doing.





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