70 YEARS OF CELEBRATING AND TRANSFORMING LIVES

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UBL: 70 years of quenching thirst

Steady growth. Uganda Breweries Ltd registered in Uganda on July 27, 1946. It was the 18th registered business in the whole of Uganda and the pioneer brewery in the country. The firm brewed its first brand—Bell Lager in 1950. Daily Monitor’s Mark Keith Muhumuza traces how the beer firm took shape and how it has grown over the years.

For a great night and a good morning’ seemed like a rather strange tagline for an alcohol brand. Alcohol is not known for providing anything like a good morning because of its association with a hangover.

That was the tagline of Bell Lager in the 2000s as competition with two other brands, Nile Special and Club Pilsner was heating up. Bell LARGER is produced by Uganda’s oldest alcohol brewer, Uganda Breweries Ltd (UBL). UBL was founded in 1946, during the colonial era, in order to serve the need for alcohol brewed in Uganda. Uganda was then dependent on imported beer.

According to the managing director, Mr Mark Ongom Ociti, UBL was the 18th registered business in Uganda and the pioneering brewery in the country making adult beverages for Ugandans by Ugandans.

Last month, the brewery marked 70 years of existence in Uganda. Bell, which is the flagship beer for the company, was first brewed in the country. The name, according to East African Breweries Ltd (EABL) that owns at least 98 per cent of UBL, was derived from Port Bell where the factory is located.

By 1951 UBL got competition from within the country with the founding of Nile Breweries Ltd (NBL). By 1956, UBL had drawn interest beyond the Uganda borders into Kenya. EABL using its financial muscle acquired an interest in UBL in what was described as a move that would ‘allow both companies a regional presence as pioneers in the brewing industry in East Africa.’

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Last month, the brewery marked 70 years of existence in Uganda. Bell, which is the flagship beer for the company, was first brewed in 1950. This was the first time Bell Lager was produced in the country. The name, according to East African Breweries Ltd (EABL) that owns at least 98 per cent of UBL, was derived from Port Bell where the factory is located. The actual description of Bell Lager is that it is an American Adjunct Lager.

According to the Beeradvocate.com, American Adjunct Lagers are “Light bodied, pale, fizzy lagers made popular by the large breweries of America after prohibition. Low bitterness, thin malts and moderate alcohol. Focus is less on flavour and more on mass-production and consumption, cutting flavour and sometimes costs with adjunct cereal grains, like rice and corn.”

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By 1967, Mr Ociti says the firm was considered one of the largest companies in Uganda alone with a market capitalisation of GBP £600,000 (currently about Shs2.7b) and about 800 shareholders, the majority being Ugandans.

Post-independence era

The post-independence era for the brewer was largely more of the same, including additional investment in 1965 until 1974 when President Idi Amin nationalised the brewery. This marked the end of the presence of EABL in Uganda. In 1971, Amin had also nationalised the operations of Nile Breweries. During this period, Uganda’s economy was under sustained pressure by high inflation.

The operating environment for brewers was also tough because the weakened Shilling meant importing raw materials at a higher price. The period lasted for almost 30 years. The performance of the brewer as a state enterprise was a bag of fortunes with sales rising as the country stabilised for a brief period. There was still political instability and there were no guarantees for sustainability.
in 1984 that UBL was handed over to EABL, but still Uganda was unstable. The brewery was producing under capacity. There were often delays and it was not until after 1986 that there were much more realistic prospects for growth. From then on, EABL’s ownership of UBL has not been a subject of nationalisation except for some diplomatic rows between Kenya and Uganda. Also, there were the occasional allegations of sabotage on the railway, which delayed delivery of inputs such as barley.

The economy started stabilising and seemed to follow a model that was business friendly, with the state taking a non-interventionist approach.

In the 1990’s, UBL’s capacity was 650,000 hectolitres. In 2001, this rose to 750,000 hectolitres.

“Today, our production capacity is more than 1.2 million hectolitres. We remain a strong contender in a highly competitive industry and are shaping the alcohol industry in Uganda while playing a positive role in society,” says Ms Rhona Arinaitwe, the communications manager.

In 1999, Uganda Distillers Ltd (UDL), a government parastatal was taken over by UBL. This allowed it to acquire the licence to start producing Uganda Waragi. UDL has been responsible for the production of Uganda Waragi since 1965.

According to EABL, Uganda Waragi “derives its name from “War Gin” as the “colonial masters” referred to the local gin that the locals would drink for “Dutch Courage” at the battlefront.”

Diageo acquires stake
In 2000, global brewing powerhouse, Diageo, acquired a controlling stake in EABL. With it, UBL would now benefit from the deep pockets and expansion plans of Diageo. Diageo Plc has 50.3 per cent in EABL group while EABL has 98.2 per cent shareholding in Uganda Breweries.

“Diageo as a brand was looking to grow its portfolio and presence in Africa, especially East Africa to capitalise on accelerating economic growth in the region. UBL was and is still the second largest company in EABL as such, part of the decision was because UBL was and is still a financially solid business with massive potential for growth,” Ms Arinaitwe explains.

Local support
UBL now produces beer where it sources sorghum, cassava, and barley from the local market. Sorghum is acquired from the lowlying areas of Teso and Barley from the highlands of Sebei. The beer brands produced under this arrangement are Senator and Ngule. This has in part generated income for farmers and created jobs.

STRENGTH
Uganda Breweries’ ambition is to be the most trusted, respected consumer goods company in Uganda. The last 70 years have been such a great experience for Uganda Breweries, a brand that continues to pride itself on its Ugandan heritage. They have given us a solid foundation on which we shall continue to build to expand this iconic brand in continuing to transform and change the lives of Ugandans positively.
UBL growing stronger - MD

Interview. In 1976, government took over full control of many private companies, including Uganda Breweries. The firm’s monthly production however plummeted from 50,000 to 5,000 cases of beer. It has since picked up the pieces to threaten the domestic market leadership. Daily Monitor’s Joseph Bahingwire, spoke to the managing director, Mr Mark Onsom Ociti.

Briefly, explain the ownership of UBL locally, regionally and internationally

Uganda Breweries is a subsidiary of East African Breweries Ltd group (EABL), which has a 98.2 per cent shareholding in the company. EABL is itself a subsidiary of Diageo Plc, which is listed on the London and New York Stock Exchanges.

How did you manage the transition from public to becoming a private entity?

I will start by giving you a short history on how Uganda Breweries Ltd which had been registered as a private company ended up as a public company. On Labour Day, May 1, 1970, in what came to be termed the “Nakivubo Declaration”, president Obote announced that the government was going to nationalise the economy. Henceforth, the government would own a majority stake of 60 percent in all major companies in the country.

As a result of this government proclamation, large companies like Uganda Breweries were targeted for what was effectively a government takeover. The government did not pay for its new shares in these companies with cash but got its shares directly from the profits. It should be noted that although the government now had a 60 percent stake in the major companies, that 60 percent was only in the final profits. The day-to-day management of these companies was left in the hands of the managers who had run the companies before the partial nationalisation.

On May 5, 1976, government subsequently went on to take over the full control of many private companies, including Uganda Breweries, running the company more or less like an extension of the civil service.

By the time Uganda Breweries was returned to its original owners - East African Breweries, Ind Coope and City Breweries of the UK, in 1984, production had fallen from over 50,000 cases of beer a month to 5,000 cases a month. Uganda Breweries has since grown from strength to strength.

The 1990 acquisition of a significant stake in Kenya Breweries (East African Breweries) by Irish brewer Guinness and the subsequent merger, in 1997, between Guinness and Grand Metropolitan, Blaize the world’s largest producer of spirits and a major producer of beer and wine - selling in over 180 countries and with offices in over 80 countries played a major role in shaping Uganda Breweries as we know it today.

In the early 90s, our annual capacity was at 650,000 hectolitres and by 2001 we were at 750,000 hectolitres. Today, our production capacity is over 1.2 million hectolitres.

What are the two or three things you consider must-do during your tenure to set your legacy?

My ambition at Uganda Breweries is to see it become the best performing, most trusted and most respected consumer goods company in Uganda. To achieve this I will ensure that:

- We increase our distribution footprint
- We are leading in the category of best employers in this country.
- We carry out product innovation that focuses on creating safer products for the untapped market potential
- We increase the formable work by UBL in promoting responsible consumption of our products.
- We continue to invest in improving the livelihoods of the communities we operate in.

How do you respond to the accusation that Uganda Breweries Ltd pollutes Lake Victoria, resulting in growth of bloom that destroys aquatic life, by discharging into it improperly treated waste water from its manufacturing plant?

Uganda Breweries has a multi-million modern effluent treatment plant that ensures all waste is treated before it is disposed of. Actually, the water we use in our production process is from the lake as such it’s imperative that we take care of this resource for business sustainability. The water that is disposed of, is cleaner than what we take out.

Beyond that, we regularly join hands with the community of Luzira, Port Bell to clean the shores of the Lake Victoria and mitigate the impact created by the heavy human activity at the port. For example, last year, we cleaned the Ngege Landing Site to commemorate the International World Water Day.

We also partnered with National Forest Authority (NFA) to rehabilitate the Navugulu Forest Reserve in Mpigi district, a forest that is a catchment area for Lake Victoria.

We have embarked on programmes to bring waste to zero and hope that through a combination of efficiency and recycling technologies, there will be no waste leaving the plant.

What in your view is UBL’s biggest contribution to Uganda’s growth and development?

As a corporate citizen, Uganda Breweries Limited has and continues to contribute immensely to the Ugandan economy through payment of taxes. Shs10.6 billion annually. This year, the brewery was ranked 4th largest tax payer in the country by the Uganda Revenue Authority. In terms of employment, the firm directly and indirectly employs more than 22,000 people many of these farmers who supply raw materials such as maize, barley and cassava.

Excessive alcohol is dangerous to health, impairs decision-making and destroys families. Does this concern you?

Our brands are made with pride, and made to be enjoyed responsibly. At Uganda Breweries, we do believe that alcohol can be part of a balanced lifestyle, when consumed moderately and responsibly by adults who choose to drink, and can play a positive role in social occasions.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION.

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and celebrations. We, however, are also cognizant of the fact that the misuse of alcohol, however, can cause serious problems for individuals, communities and society.

For Uganda Breweries as a business, the social consequences of alcohol misuse are real and important and we know that alcohol misuse can damage our reputation, the reputation of our brands, and our licence to operate. And as members of families and communities, we know how its consequences can harm individuals and those around them.

That is why we are passionate about doing everything we can to reduce alcohol related harm in society, through our own programmes and through partnership and collaboration with others.

In Uganda, we are known for our leadership in the active advocacy of responsible alcohol use. We have been at the forefront of self-regulation, spearheading clear messages that emphasise zero tolerance to drunk driving, underage consumption as well as educating on the dangers of excessive consumption of alcohol.

For the past five years, we have run a responsible drinking campaign dubbed the Red Card Campaign where we move from institutions, to bars, to purchase points like supermarkets handling out and giving information on the correct and safe way to enjoy our products.

Where do you see UBL in the next five years?
The last 70 years have been such a great experience for Uganda Breweries, a brand that continues to pride itself on its Ugandan heritage. They have given us a solid foundation on which we shall continue to build to expand this iconic brand in continuing to transform and change the lives of Ugandans positively.

In five years, I see a Uganda Breweries that continues to thrive both at the national, regional and international level. We plan to continue to put our customers at the forefront and innovate to respond to their ever-changing demands. We shall continue our initiatives in the communities that seek to improve the livelihoods of farmers.

What game-changing innovations/initiatives should your loyal customers expect?
Without giving away too much, I can say that we shall focus on a lot of energies on innovations that align our business goals to the needs and pockets of our consumers. We will be working a lot with the local teams to invest in the right product mix and packaging that matches with our increasingly mobile lifestyles. More importantly, we will seek to leverage the knowledge of the local market and market needs, fuse that with our years of experience and range of global winning brands to deliver the best consumer experiences for all the different categories of our consumers.

What do you think makes UBL stand out in a crowded industry and what advice would you give managers of big companies in town on human resource management and growth?
There is a saying by Richard Branson that goes; “Take care of your employees and they will take care of your business.” At Uganda Breweries we recognise that the engagement of our employees is critical to our business performance. We believe that our success is dependent on our ability to create an environment where all our employees feel included and able to perform at their best. Our aim is to continue building a company that releases the potential of its employees and provide a work environment where people can learn, grow and have fun.

We also recognise that our employees have commitments away from the workplace and encourage working patterns that balance home life and career.

This in turn supports a culture of innovation that is behind some of the best products in the industry that then earn us the trust of our consumers.

Last year, Uganda Breweries was named the second best employer in the country by The Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE) based on our Growth and Employee welfare programmes. We are on a journey to be number one.

Let’s look at the East African region. Different tax regimes and infrastructure deficits between the countries present huge costs to businesses. What do you propose East African leaders should do differently to address the plight of entrepreneurs?
Over the last 10 years, we have seen East African integration taking shape especially with the creation of the East African Common Market and Customs Union. We have seen the creation of one Stop Border Posts, the elimination of most of the non-tariff trade barriers as well as a single customs territory that has greatly eased the cost of doing business.

Internally, we have also seen huge improvements in both energy and transport infrastructure. That said, there is still however, a great need to especially fast-track regional inter-state transport infrastructure especially the Standard Gauge Railway, which is expected to reduce the cost of freight from Mombasa by 69 per cent from the current average of $160 per tonne to an average of $90 per tonne.

Locally, we also believe there is need to address the money markets and stimulate local production and demand to stabilise the erratic shilling as well as reduce the cost of money. So as to make our goods competitive in the region and beyond.

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We aspire to be the market leader, Juliana

Milestone. Uganda Breweries Ltd is celebrating 70 years of excellent operations in the country. This journey has largely been informed by the marketing strategies that the brewery has had over the years. Ms Juliana Kagwa, the marketing director, talked to Daily Monitor’s Stephen Wandera.

How many brands does Uganda Breweries produce?
We have a wide range of products from hard to soft stuff. We produce beer, spirits ready to drink (mixed drink Smirnoff ice, Smirnoff grana), and non-alcoholic Alvaro (zero alcoholic) that is exciting, especially for the younger generation.

Which of your brands stand out?
Uganda Breweries has a total of 36 brands but actively advertises seven. We have Bell, Uganda Waragi, Tusker, Guinness, Senator, Johnnie Walker and Smirnoff. Bell, Uganda Waragi and Senator of recent have been our dominant but Ngule is also enjoying a good market share. But the issue of dominance is relative because beer is appreciated by each sector of consumers. Uganda Waragi gained after we reduced by Shs500 early this year that has seen it dominate one of leading market shares.

How is Ngule performing?
Buganda Kingdom has been on a commercialisation journey and we thought it wiser to partner with them. That is how we started producing Engule, which is made from cassava. It is doing well so far.

How has your relationship with Diageo and East African Breweries strengthened your portfolio?
We have leveraged on intellectual property rights to build on their international brands such as Johnnie Walker. UBL has had staff exchange visits with Nairobi and London. I, for instance, spent some years in Kenya managing Jonnie Walker and that is why I am here to do more less the same.

In your opinion, what keeps your brands relevant to the consumer?
It is about our clear marketing strategies, well researched and tested beer as well as a skilled human resource. That precisely is why we have remained afloat for 70 years, and more years to come. You have to innovate and move with the consumer. Innovation is critical to this business.

What has led to your success?
Bell Lager, Pilsner, Uganda Waragi were recently recognised with excellent awards. Our brands are among the leading top 15, globally. Last year, we were recognised as the second best employer in the country.

We are an award winning brand. We are also exporting some of our products to countries such as South Sudan, DR Congo and Rwanda.

Our consumers enjoy Bell, Uganda Waragi and Ngule among our other brands.

What is Tubaale promotion all about?
It is about rewarding and giving back to our consumers. Bell is giving out Shs1b in eight weeks something that has not been done before. We are giving away motorcycles (popularly known as Boda bodas) and taxis. Every time you open the crown, you stand a chance of winning a piece of land, boda boda, taxi, television set and airtime worth Shs1b.

We have regional concerts and a grand finale in Kampala next month. On August 20, we will be in Mbale followed by Mbale and Gulu. One has to buy a Bell as an entry ticket to the concerts.

Where do you see Uganda Breweries brands in the next five years?
We expect to be number one by value and volume in both beer and spirits. A total of about 20 per cent new volumes are coming from new brands and penetrations. We are now buying cassava from as far as Fort Portal, Mubende and looking as far as Gulu district.

UBL has been partnering with 17,000 farmers in east, north, central and west. We support farming communities with training, quality seeds, transport, and financial literacy. We want to be number one in alcohol category, but also respected in the market.

We want the public to consume alcohol responsibly. UBL does not advertise underage drinking we condemn it. We have gone into an anti-drunk driving campaign, and this is a reason we have been in business longer.

We are proud to be part of this great success

Long live UBL. Long live Greater North Distributors.
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How your favourite beer is brewed

Cooling. Eventually, when the alcohol is produced, it is cooled down to zero degrees, creating cold conditions that force the yeast to aggregate together, become heavier before dropping down to the bottom of the tank to be removed.

Many beer consumers know how various brands taste. But what remains a mystery to many is how beer is produced. When you visit Uganda Breweries Ltd in Luzira and have the opportunity to acquaint yourself with the production process like this reporter did, you realise that this is not only a long but highly meticulous and scientific process.

Mr Paul Bwaniki is the brewing manager. He says; “It always starts with the raw materials.”

For their flagship beer, Bell Lager, UBL uses malt, barley, corn starch and aroma hops as the main raw materials. Tusker Malt Lager on the other hand is made using 100 per cent of the raw ingredients. Overall, 70 per cent of the raw materials are sourced locally, with malt, hops and small quantities of barley as the imported materials.

Brewing

The first step in the production process is brewing, which involves a number of other steps. “Of course when our raw materials are retrieved from the big storage silos, our first step is grain sorting.”

Sorting aims at removing metal particles and stones, and this is done by a specialised magnet and a stone destroyer respectively, after which a machine called a classifier is used to remove any light weight impurities such as paper and polythene. Cleaned grain then falls into the mill for grinding and size reduction to form grist; a finer form of milled barley, sorghum or cassava, depending on the brand of beer to be produced.

“Thereafter, we carry out mashing where the grist is conveyed into a mash conversion vessel. Here, grist is mixed with water. We also add salts and other enzymes that help break down the starch into fermentable and non-fermentable sugars,” Mr Bwaniki says.

He adds: “Mashing takes about two hours and must be a very well controlled and pre-determined process that ends when there is no more starch left in this solution, after which mash filtering begins.”

Filtering separates the solid mash, called spent grain from the liquid mash, called wort. Spent grain is disposed of usually as animal feed, then the wort which is now made of fermented sugar, vitamins, amino acids and proteins is passed into the wort kettle for boiling at temperatures ranging from 95 to 96 degrees centigrade.

“Boiling basically helps us to sterilize the wort and eliminates contamination. But beyond that, boiling assists in improving colour to the desired shade, and it is at this stage that we add hops; first the bitter ones, which are boiled to increase bitterness to a desired level depending on the duration of boiling. The aroma hops are added much later, toward the end of the boiling process just to ensure they do not completely evaporate,” he explains.

Wort clarification follows the boiling, and it is done in a wort kettle—a gigantic steel tank. Clarification aims at removing any protein that may still exist in the wort because protein gives the beer a dull and hazy look.

“We remove this protein by using a whirl pool, where the wort is introduced into the next compartment at a tangent so that it swirls. And as this happens, the solids, including protein and residual spent grain will settle in the middle, leaving the desired liquid on the sides for us to extract,” he adds.

Then extracted wort in a finer form is passed through a heat exchanger to cool down, and then pitched, meaning that yeast is introduced and some oxygen added for the yeast to reproduce and increase in number. This marks the end of the first step.

Fermentation follows

The next stage is fermentation, which takes place in the fermenter. Here, yeast that was introduced at the first step ferments the fermentable sugars, converting them into alcohol and also producing necessary flavoured compounds.

Like all the other stages, fermentation which can take days is computer controlled, where the operator only needs to sit behind a computer to fine-tune and over-see the process, making sure that temperature, volume and other conditions are ideal.

Eventually, when the alcohol is produced, it is cooled down to zero degrees, creating cold conditions that force the yeast to aggregate together, become heavier before dropping down to the bottom of the tank to be removed.

Maturation

The third step, maturation then begins. Here, beer will be stored for specified days for it to mature. Temperatures are dropped to about -1 or -2 degrees so that any remaining yeast can be removed together with any unwanted particles, making the beer bright clear, a quality called colloidal stability. The flavours too will mature.

Final step

The fourth and final step is filtration, where mature beer is filtered using a filter machine. “No yeast cell or any unnecessary protein should ever pass this stage. We filter at very low temperatures which really lowers the possibility of anything unwanted to sieve through. At the end, we do not just have clear but bright beer,” he says.

Since UBL brews its beer more concentrated in terms of alcohol content, carbonated water is added to bring beer from the higher gravity to its sell alcohol by volume level.

It is then transferred into a gigantic bright beer tank, where final quality checks are done before it is passed to be packaged and sold for consumption.
Changing lives through education

Scholarship. Uganda Breweries introduced a scholarship scheme that has enabled many needy but bright students access university education. Daily Monitor’s Joseph Bahingwire, spoke to Ms Peace Agumenawe, one of the beneficiaries.

How do you describe UBL’s contribution to people’s lives in the country?
Uganda Breweries’ contribution is exceptional. The company has continuously managed to give back to the community through various initiatives such as the Skills for Life programme.

You are among the beneficiaries of the UBL scholarship, how has this scheme benefited you?
It enabled me to enroll and complete my Bachelor’s degree in Information Technology at Makerere University by fully sponsoring the course, including tuition, accommodation, upkeep, and scholastic materials. It also helped expose and prepare me for the work environment. All expenses were also covered during that time. I was also given a monthly stipend to cover transport and lunch costs. I was also taken through the brewery’s operations in the various departments which increased my knowledge about the business. A classroom to board room challenge was organised as soon as I completed university and through collaboration with KCB Bank, McKinney Rogers Foundation and Uganda Breweries, I was treated to a week of training in Nairobi in January 2013 during which I got to interact with other beneficiaries from other universities such as Strathmore and Kyambogo. The training involved identifying solutions to a real business challenge set by KCB Bank. The training helped to improve my skills in areas such as personal leadership, networking, presentation, communication and teamwork.

How effective is the selection of beneficiaries?
The UBL scholarship is a very transparent selection because adverts are placed in newspapers and everyone interested applies from where the suitable benefits are identified.

What procedure did you follow to get this scholarship opportunity?
The procedure required applicants to physically hand in their application forms at the UBL offices in Luzira. Successful candidates were then shortlisted for oral interviews before a final selection of the winners was announced.

Is there anything else you want to say about the UBL scholarship scheme?
The UBL scholarship scheme was a life changing opportunity for me. The foundation has kept in touch with each one of us which I find remarkable too. I was able to get a job and I am now able to sustain myself. I urge all students who need support to complete their education to always look out for the UBL scholarship adverts and apply because they are transparent and any one can benefit.

SKILLS FOR LIFE. The East Africa Breweries Limited (EABL) Foundation scholarships under the Skills for Life programme awards four scholarships annually. Beneficiaries must be Ugandan students with outstanding academic results but with a financial need, who have completed the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education and are in possession of a university admission letter to any local university for the following courses:

- Bachelor of Business/Commerce
- Bachelor of Engineering
- Bachelor of Food Science
- Bachelor of Business Information Technology/Computer Science

The programme has been running for 11 years and 38 Ugandans have benefitted so far.
Packaging and distribution

BY MATHIAS WANDERA
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

A long line of bottles flows meticulously on conveyor belts together with unmistakable factory noises coming from moving machines. That is the kind of environment that welcomes you to the Packaging Section at Uganda Breweries in Luzira.

From the onsite, it is easy to guess that packaging around here is quick and highly automated process, something Mr. Geoffrey Tushabe, the packaging manager, is quick to confirm.

“This is a new packaging line. Initially, we could package 40,000 bottles in an hour. That number has now increased to 50,000. But it is not only the capacity we have elevated, the technology too is finer,” he says.

Several empty crates of Tusker Malt Lager bottles are stacked away in a wide cage in one corner. “Most of these are old bottles retrieved from the market after consumption. But we also use new bottles which will settle above the drink; then the bottle is crowned. The filled bottle moves to the pasteurization machine to be pasteurized. The purpose of this is to kill any remaining micro-organisms. The bottle comes into the pasteurization machine at a temperature of around 5 degrees, then warmed up to about 60 degrees and held there for several minutes before it is cooled down to room temperature of around 28 to 30 degrees, then released to be labelled depending on the brand.

Labelling is followed by coding where a self-by date is indicated; then bottles are sent to the palletiser to be packed into pallets and sent out to be stored at the warehouse and later distributed to the market.

Distribution

Initially, UBL handled its own distribution with minimal support from distribution and delivery companies. But in 2009, brewery’s mandate for logistics was given to DHL as a third party logistics provider, according to Mr Edward Kyomuhendo. We decided on outsourcing as a distribution strategy because we wanted to concentrate on our core purpose, which is making beer. So DHL does our warehousing and logistics. They transport our beer from plant to our distributors around the country. Internally, UBL has 58 distributors that DHL delivers to, and to be a registered distributor, you must have a standard warehouse of about 10,000 crates; which capacity can vary according to location in the country.

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- Kawempe Rd. 
- Nsambya Rd. 
- Jinja Road

DISTRIBUTION.

In Uganda, UBL has 58 distributors that ensure that the beer reaches the market. To be a registered distributor, you must have a standard warehouse of about 10,000 crates, which capacity can vary according to location in the country. You need to have capital of between Shs1b to Shs3b.

Quickly, these crates are fork-lifted to the depalletizer machine 20meters away, which takes the crates from the pallets onto the crate conveyers. In fast procession, crates move to the AL packer machine that lifts the bottles out of six crates at once.

“Now as you can see, the bottles get onto bottle conveyers and move to be washed,” Mr Tushabe says, pointing at files of bottles moving in the bottle washer machine, which takes about 20 bottles. “These bottles come with labels and of course dirt, and all this is cleaned away here. First, water is used to rinse off the dirt, old labels removed, then caustic solution further cleanses the bottles at 80 degrees centigrade before it is finally rinsed by fresh water; dried and released from the washer,” he says.

After bottle washing, bottles are pushed by the conveyers past the electronic bottle inspector which determines the fit for purpose glass by inspecting each bottle for cleanliness and traces of residual liquid. It also detects any cracks, ensuring that any bottle that is not fit for purpose is knocked off the line. Automatically, with the conveyor maintaining its fast motion, rejected bottles leave the line, and the good bottles are allowed onto the production conveyers headed for the filler.

Filling

The filler is a big wide tank that rotates in top speed, a quality that ensures the line’s capacity of 50,000 bottles an hour is maintained.

At the filler, a couple of things happen. First, double pre-evacuation takes place where air is drawn out of the bottle twice. After that, carbon dioxide is pumped into the bottle, and then finally beer is filled in. This beer will displace the carbon dioxide which will settle above the drink; then the bottle is crowned.

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Tusker beer bottles ready for distribution at UBL factory in Luzira. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

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Long serving employees speak out

JOSEPH SSEKAMWA, TECHNICAL OPERATOR

When did you join UBL?
I joined UBL on August 1, 1988 as a process minder. My job was to oversee the machines and assist the machine operators.

How different is your then and today?
Of course, today everything here is modern. Back then, we used to have so many employees on the shift. Over 40 people would man processes in each department in a single shift. We would work three shifts in a 24-hour cycle. Today, it is rare to have even 13 people on a shift, and we have two instead of three shifts. So, for me, automation makes for a good change.

How many roles have you taken on in your 27-year tenure?
Currently, I am on the fourth role, which I think is good for me. UBL has allowed me to go for several trainings, something that has enhanced my knowledge and skills.

Is this what you have decided to work with the company this long?
Yes, that is one of the reasons. I also like the teams I have worked with over the years which I think goes down to the management style. There is always room for us to air out our views to the top management. So our voice is always heard, which is important to me as an employee.

How has working with UBL contributed to your personal life?
It has contributed in more ways. I am a man with a family and of course UBL has given me the financial backing to support my family. Beyond that, it has given me a chance to develop my career. The brewery is now a family; there is a great sense of belonging here, and I like it.

Do you see yourself working for this company for some more years?
Definitely! It has been long already, but I think I will stick around for a couple of more years, though eventually I will have to throw in the towel. But even then I will leave a proud member of the UBL family.

MARGARET AWORI, MATERIALS PLANNER

How many years have you worked for UBL?
Sixteen years now. I joined this company in 2000. By then, I was in my Senior Six vacation and I worked here as a casual labourer. In December 2000, I was promoted to a process assistant role to work on the line.

What roles did you take on after, till this point?
Working as a process assistant was a very manual job but I managed to do it for two years before moving to stores in the spirit plant for one year as an assistant stores manager. Eventually, I moved to brewing as a materials clerk in April 2009. My job was to ensure the processes had materials to run, and then when the materials planner job for beer was advertised in 2014, I applied and got it. Later on materials planning roles for beer and spirits were merged and I was appointed for the job, which is my current position.

How would you describe your experience at the brewery over the years?
It has been a constant learning process, coupled with hard work and I think my hard work has continuously been rewarded from a casual worker to the general materials planner.

Have you at some point faced ridicule for being a woman that works in a brewery?
Yes, and this comes from people outside the brewery, though of course perceptions are changing of late. Initially, people thought women that worked in breweries were maybe ill-mannered, which is not the case.

How did you handle such perception?
It was all about constantly explaining to the people that this was the wrong perception. Thankfully, time has eroded such shallow stereotypes.

What has been your most memorable moment with UBL to this point?
The day I was hired was non-casual role in 2005 still remains a very fond memory. It contributed in more ways. I am a man with a family and of course UBL has given me the financial backing to support my family. Better still, I have moved up and about almost all over the country, which is sometimes hard but still something I enjoy.

JUDITH EZARLI, DIVISION SALES MANAGER, NORTHERN AND EASTERN REGIONS

For how many years have you been with UBL?
It has been 11 years and one month to be exact, having joined in July 2006. I started out as an accounts manager in the north, specifically West Nile. And I have seen myself grow through the ranks to take on seven other roles, my current position inclusive. Having joined as an accounts manager, which is more like a sales representative position right now, I moved to sales manager, still in the north. I also handled commercialisation and innovation, cycle planning and then took on promotional roles thereafter.

What would you say motivates you as a person?
Basically, I am motivated by challenges. I enjoy the whole thrill of problem solving.

Have you had a lot of such problem-solving roles and opportunities here at UBL?
Yes, I would say my experience here has been challenging, given the kind of operations I do. I have to move up and about almost all over the country, which is sometimes hard but still something I enjoy.

How would you have handled that?
It is all about thinking positively and knowing what your job is truly about regardless of what other people have to say. For me this is a source of income, it takes care of my children and it is job I like any other. So, I have accepted it and ignored any mean sentiments some other people might have.

Joining, did you expect to work here longer than a decade?
No, honestly not. I actually thought I would be in this business for a maximum of six years. But the constant changes in my roles have continuously kept me challenged, providing me with different goals to beat which is motivating and of course interesting. On average, I have spent two years on a role so there has been no moment of boredom for me, which is why I have stayed longer.

How has UBL bettered your life?
It has given me a decent survival as it is my source of income. Better still, I have been able to create a network while on the line of duty with UBL. I am always meeting different people both in and outside the organization who have been helpful to me. I generally love this job and I think I will stay for many more years.

CONGRATULATIONS
UGANDA BREWERIES LIMITED

We would like to congratulate Uganda Breweries Limited on their 70th Anniversary – what a great achievement! At DHL Supply Chain, we greatly value and appreciate the long-standing partnership we have had with East African Breweries over the years – working closely with you in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania by providing the needed logistics services of warehousing and transportation to store, manage and deliver the products that East African Breweries’ customers cherish so much.

We are proud of this milestone accomplishment and wish Uganda Breweries Limited continued success for the next 70 years.
Ekenyu finds gold in cassava growing

BY SIMON PETER EMWAMU
editorial@up.nationmedia.com

The old adage that fortune favours the brave resonates well in the life of Christine Akello Ekenyu. Ms Ekenyu has beaten odds to earn a decent living from growing cassava, a rather an ordinary food crop. For a widow from Abuket Village, Kyere Sub-county in Serere District, cassava growing is the reason she affords a smile.

Like many others, Ms Ekenyu has been grown cassava for more than 40 years mostly for food consumption. But her breakthrough to a small-scale commercial farmer started in 2013 when Uganda Breweries Ltd (UBL) embraced her to benefit from its agricultural extension services, a move that has since elevated the mother of six to a cassava processor of about 20 tonnes of fine white cassava flour also consumed by UBL.

Today, any visitor in Abuket village can see her passion for cassava from the well-attended to leafy gardens of latest cassava varieties from NARO around her home. This has earned her the nickname Mama Cassava for her role in encouraging her village mates to take on cassava farming. She is also a certified multiplier of the latest cassava, orange and sweet potato varieties that are widely demanded.

Life before
Prior to her breakthrough, she recounts how she lived basically on potatoes in a poverty-stricken family typical of many poverty ridden households in many parts of the country.

Today, any visitor in Abuket village can see her passion for cassava from the well-attended to leafy growing gardens of latest cassava varieties from NARO around her home; which has earned her a nickname Mama Cassava, an identity bestowed on her for her encouragement to her village mates to take on cassava farming. She is also a certified multiplier of the latest cassava, orange and sweet potato varieties that are widely demanded.

Due to land constraints in the area, she plants high yielding and fast growing cassava varieties annually on between six and 10 acres. This she supplements to match UBL demand by enabling other farmers to take advantage of her processing machines in order to realise value for their hard earned cassava production. Ms Ekenyu says the secret she has found in cassava farming lays much in the latest cassava varieties Nasse 14 &19. They yield much and for now they remain less susceptible to cassava mosaic, a disease devastating especially conventional varieties in many parts of the country.

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"We grew ordinary cassava that we used to sell cheaply at Shs100 a kilogramme and for every one acre, we could only realise Shs100,000. This was exploitation that we had ignorantly lived to accept until UBL came to our rescue through their extension agricultural services," she says.

Life changing
As a cultivator and processor, Ms Ekenyu has grossly registered a change in her family life, not just in monetary terms. She is a peer educator whose visitors’ book alone speaks volumes of high ranking officers. Many of her guests are reaching out for knowledge on how to cultivate and process high quality cassava.

She earns about Shs131m per year through adding value to cassava by way of grating and further processing it into flour that would take her years under the old kind of cassava cultivation. The 58-year-old, also chairperson of Soroti Sweet Potato Association says she has risen from a household custodian to now being hosted at farmer forums where she facilitates as a peer educator on cassava farming.

“This is inspiring for me. It is the greatest achievement of my life that I never thought would ever happen. If the clock could be revised and I grow younger again, there is a lot I would do,” she says.

From cassava proceeds, Ms Ekenyu has managed to have four of her children graduate in various disciplines. Apart from education as an investment, she has managed to construct furnished houses, kitchen and resting shed for visitors, all from cassava proceeds.

“I am grateful to Uganda Breweries Ltd for having brought me this far,” she says.

UBL support
MR Paul Bongomin Okello, an agronomist at UBL, says the firm has supported Ms Ekenyu in best agricultural practices.

These include how to handle cassava both at the garden and at the grating and pressing area, where the root tubers are processed for value addition.

He says the brewery has also supported hundreds of farmers in Teso and Lango sub regions to link them to agriculture product service and input providers, such as NARO & NaSSARI for easy access to new varieties.

“As UBL, we are proud for the good work people like Ms Ekenyu have done for themselves. She has managed to rise from a village farmer to now a peer educator. It is not easy to find committed widows, she is one among the few, some end up living a life of self-denial and wishful thinking,” he says.
We congratulate UBL upon her 70th anniversary of transforming and celebrating lives.
Nyeko resigns top office job to venture into maize

Mr Francis Nyeko is an accountant and also holds a Master’s in Project Planning and Management. He worked as the general manager at Phenix Logistics after serving as the firm’s finance and administration manager. He would later in 2012 venture into farming, growing maize.

Although he worked for different organisations for more than 20 years, his dream was to become self-employed and also create jobs, especially for the youth.

“Starting a business is always a challenge but you have to work hard,” he says.

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Nyeko started growing maize in 2012 in Alero, Mutunda Sub-county in Kiryandongo District. He has been growing maize since 2012.

With a small farm of about 130 hectares, Nyeko was supplying maize to the industrial sector. He then expanded his farm to 240 hectares, which enabled him to harvest more than 130 tonnes of maize. He then started his own milling company to process the maize.

Nyeko has since 2012 ventured into other areas such as poultry, pig farming and processing grains. He has expanded his farm to 120 acres of land, which enabled him to harvest more than 130 tonnes of maize, fetching about Shs45m.

Nyeko aims to expand his farm to 400 acres to supply raw materials to the brewery. He also plans to establish a maize mill to process the maize and supply it to the brewery.

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HAPPY 70TH ANNIVERSARY

We at Victoria Motors Limited congratulate Uganda Breweries Limited on their 70th Anniversary. We greatly appreciate our long standing partnership and wish you continued success.

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It took me 20 years to become chief brewer-Matembe

Interview. Mr Nehemiah Matembe retired from Uganda Breweries in 2002 after serving for 30 years. He spoke to Daily Monitor’s Joseph Bahingwire about his experience at the brewery.

When and how did you join Uganda Breweries Ltd?

I joined UBL in January 1972 immediately after completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and Bio-Chemistry. I first worked in the laboratory under Mr. Andrew Oyeng, the then chief chemist.

For how long did you serve UBL?

I served UBL from 1972 to 2002, which makes it 30 years of service to the brewery in different capacities.

What exactly was your daily task?

During my tenure, I was able to create team work and cohesion among staff at the brewing department. This helped us to keep producing enough beer despite the economic challenges of the 1970s where the raw materials were not forthcoming, with limited supply of spare parts and power shortages.

What has been your major contribution to the brewery?

During my tenure, I was able to create team work and cohesion among staff at the brewing department. This helped us to keep producing enough beer despite the economic challenges of the 1970s where the raw materials were not forthcoming, with limited supply of spare parts and power shortages. I made sure that there was motivation, which enabled us to maintain the quality specifically for Bell, which is the company’s flagship brand.

The other landmark is the succession plan that was established and maintained at UBL. This has ensured that the quality of brewers and production staff remain high. I left highly skilled people in place to ensure continued quality at the brewery. This has kept UBL as a company of quality products and a highly competitive player in the market.

What is your opinion about UBL today?

My opinion is very positive because UBL has remained a progressive company. I have followed its activities over the years and its transformation as the only company into production of both spirits and beers, which has made it an international operator. Without sticking to quality standards this would not have been possible.

Given a chance, what would you change at the brewery today?

There is nothing to change at UBL today because everything was achieved when we got a good and strong succession plan in place. Given a chance to serve UBL again I would fall perfectly into the system and work with the team in place to achieve greater success for the brewery.

Managing environment sustainably

Interview. Managing pollutants remains a critical public concern for manufacturing companies such as UBL. Daily Monitor’s David Mafabi spoke to UBL supply director, Shane Healy.

In your opinion, what is the best approach to addressing environmental challenges in the country?

First and foremost, it is good to appreciate that the world today is facing unprecedented, interconnected environmental challenges in areas including climate change, water, energy, biodiversity and agriculture. With the business relying on natural resources directly and via supply chains, new corporate efforts are needed to address environmental responsibilities, value natural capital, and better understand the linkages between resources.

What kind of relationship exists between UBL and the environment?

We are aware that we take our materials from the environment. To this effect, we anticipate the risks our processes cause to the environment. To this effect, we anticipate risk through annual risk assessment and design controls to ensure that the impacts are controlled. We have encouraged and push for collective industrial action, as environment protection cannot be achieved individually.

What are some of the major ways through which you manage pollutants at UBL?

We appreciate that the waste generated by UBL is actually a resource elsewhere. To this effect, we encourage recycling/re-use, for instance of solid waste. We have also gone for pollutant minimisation in our processes by installing modern equipment, which is resource efficient. Where short-term minimisation cannot be achieved, we have constructed treatment facilities such as wastewater treatment plant to treat wastewater or use approved facilities/contractors to manage disposal. We ensure our emissions meet regulatory requirements.

As UBL, how do you support the 10 principles of UN global compact on environment?

UBL and Diageo have:

- Codes of conduct or practice for its operations and projects that confirms commitment to care for health and the environment.
- Developed company guidelines on the consistent application of codes of conduct/practices throughout the company. These are communicated company wide and tested at least annually.
- Assigned roles and responsibilities from senior executives to shop floor to oversee environment management and implementation of codes, practices and guidelines.
- Established communication with stakeholders, in a pro-active, early stage and transparent manner, to ensure effective communication of information about uncertainties and potential risks and to deal with related enquiries and complaints.
- Joined industry-wide collaborative efforts to share knowledge and deal with the issue of precaution, in particular in regard to sustainable development (free planting and enabling communities’ access to water) and responsible consumption of alcohol by adults.
70 YEARS
of excellent service

on your anniversary.
An incredible amount of progress has been made on your 70th anniversary and we intend to keep working with you for continued success.
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.
Uganda Breweries has a modern effluent treatment plant that ensures all waste is treated before disposed of. The firm regularly joins hands with the community of Luzira, Port Bell to clean the shores of the Lake Victoria and mitigate the impact created by the heavy human activity at the port. Last year, UBL partnered with National Forestry Authority to rehabilitate the Navigulu Forest reserve in Mpi District, a forest that is a catchment area for Lake Victoria.

UBL supply chain director Healy Shane guides visitors on a tour at the modern effluent treatment plant.

UBL in the community

Left. UBL in partnership with NTV Uganda plant trees in Navigulu Forest reserve.
Below, the Red Card campaign partnership to fight drink driving.

Modern toilets at Sofia Market in Busia District built by UBL.
Dokolo farmers reaping from sorghum

BY BILL OKETCH
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

Sorghum is being considered as a very viable crop by many farmers in Dokolo District, Lango sub-region.

Mr Denis Oguta, a Bardyang Primary School teacher in Agwata Sub-county, is a model sorghum farmer in the area. The 31-year-old started growing the Ekupirum variety in 2012 when he planted six kilogrammes, and he is now supplying sorghum to Uganda Breweries Ltd (UBL). Last year, he supplied 8 tonnes of sorghum to the brewery.

He says the earnings have enabled him to pay fees for three of his brother’s children, two of who are in Senior Two and the third in Senior One.

“In 2012, I bought six kilogrammes of sorghum grain and planted in my small garden, and that year alone I earned about Shs1.8m. This season, I want to increase my production because I plan to get more than Shs50m. I planted four acres this season and I’m about to harvest,” he explains.

In 2015, he earned Shs6m after investing only Shs300,000. After harvesting, farmers sell the produce to buyers, including UBL at Shs800 and above for a kilogramme.

To Mr Moses Akora, another farmer, “Sorghum-growing has greatly improved our livelihoods. I’m able to further my education and also support my relatives better. Many community members admire our lifestyle and this has encouraged others to grow the crop.”

Mr Oguta is constructing a permanent house at his Odeye village, Amuda parish in Agwata, while his friend Akora is constructing a permanent house too.

“Sorghum-growing has greatly improved our lifestyle and this has encouraged others to grow the crop.”

Mr Oguta has used some of his earnings to pay fees for three of his brother’s children; two of whom are in Senior Two and the third in Senior One.

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When dreams get shattered due to uncertainties, many people often resort to excessive consumption of alcohol as a way of expressing their frustration.

This did not cross Mr Dan Malinga’s mind in 2004 when his parents failed to raise fees to take him to the next level after completing O-Level at Sebei College Tegeres with Aggregate 30 in 2003.

“I really felt bad at first on accepting the reality of not going back to school due to lack of fees. I knew my parents were poor and I accepted my fate since I had gone through a rough time to complete Senior Four,” says Mr Dan Malinga, a first born in a family of six children.

Getting started

In 2004, he set out on the farm, planting Irish potatoes and beans, which he secured through casual labour earnings.

He bought two packets of barley grains in 2005, which he planted and sold the produce to UGB Breweries. He currently plants between 10 and 12 packets where he harvests up to 100 bags.

A bag of barley goes for Shs120,000 at UBL stores in Kapchorwa and also started constructing a permanent house.

Although more than 40 farmers from Odeye Village are currently engaged in sorghum growing, accessing agro-chemicals for spraying the farms, and quality and affordable seeds are some of their challenges.

“We would be very happy if UBL had brought us seeds at a subsidised price,” says Mr Oguta.

UBL support officer in charge of Lango Sub-region, Mr Paul Okello, says UBL provides agricultural extension services to farmers, mainly in the area of training and value-chain linkages.

“We provide training on best farming practices and we partner with other institutions so that we add value to the trainings that we provide to the farmers. UBL is working with more than 17,000 small-holder farmers in the region.

Sorghum is grown mainly in the south-western highland areas of Uganda and in the lowland areas of the southern and northern regions of the country.

According to a report by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the area planted with sorghum remained stable, the production decreased from 467,000 tonnes in 1975 to 430,000 tonnes in 2002.

Barley: Malinga harvesting money

Shs305,000 on the open market.

His annual earnings range from Shs60m to Shs100m depending on the prevailing weather conditions of the two seasons.

Barley yields well with heavy rains and moderate temperatures. “This year, production was very poor because of the dry spell after planting. I was lucky to harvest 60 bags from 10 packets of seeds because I planted with the first rains,” he says.

UBL support

UBL supplies Barley farmers with seeds at subsidised prices as well as offer free extension services in Agronomic practices, and a ready market for the produce.

Mr Denis Oguta has used some of his earnings to pay fees for three of his brother’s children; two of whom are in Senior Two and the third in Senior One.

As a model farmer, Mr Malinga also buys from other farmers to meet a growing demand.

Chain link buyer

After years of planting and selling to UBL on a large-scale, Mr Malinga ventured into buying from other farmers to improve his earnings.

Mr Joas Musega, the area UBL support officer, describes Mr Malinga as a trusted and committed partner of UBL.

“He is not just a barley farmer but a strong agent. Without him, we would not have access to Kwosir’s barley in upper Kween,” he says.

Achievements

Mr Malinga is proud to have been able to raise fees for his siblings while saving for his children. “My follower is a primary school teacher, another is a third-year Law student at Islamic University in Uganda while the third one will be joining university to do engineering this year,” he says.

He has a big store for produce and an Isuzu truck that helps him in transportation of produce and farm inputs.

He adds that he has moved from one grass-thatched hut to a semi-permanent for himself and his parents.

Challenges

More than 2,000 barley farmers in the Elgon Sub-region face challenges in harvesting, and planting, which is purely manual leading to losses.

Heavy rains during harvest season add to their losses as it reduces quality and sometimes the harvest germinates with high moisture.

Threats to barley farming in Elgon

Though attitude is changing towards barley farming among staunch Christians, barley faces stiff competition from other more profit-making crops such as Irish potatoes, onions and cabbages.

Future plans

He plans to buy a plot of land in Kapchorwa Town and construct a commercial house as well as a permanent residential house in Kwosir next year.

He also wants to have a personal company so that he can start doing more business with UBL and hopes to go back to school to acquire business and management skills.

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UBL SUPPORT.

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