

C&G: BODAPLUS K LTD COMMITTED TO LOCAL MANUFACTURING OF HIGH QUALITY MOTOR BIKES SAFETY GADGETS:



Mr. Pavit Kenth- CEO BodaPlus , Mr. Raphael Atanda - Mktng Mngr C&G, & Mr. Navroop Rattia - BodaPlus Plant Head admire a BodaPlus helmet

Sandeep Radia, the COO (Chief Operating Officer) of BodaPlus Ltd has been in the motorcycle (popular today as Boda Boda) sector for 15 years to date and can testify that most of the operators are good people out to eke out an honest living. The Boda Boda operators need to be well understood and supported in their endeavors. "These are good people who work hard to make a living. Yet, they often are treated harshly by most citizens in the country this explaining the unbecoming behavior which they show as a defense mechanism when confronted with road traffic use issues," says Sandeep.

"When I realized that Kenya was receiving very poor quality imported helmets from China and India, indeed akin to utter rubbish, I visited the helmets plants in those respective

countries and realized that it's possible to have a Motorcycle helmet plant in Kenya which would be capable of supplying the East Africa region; this informed our decision of founding BodaPlus Limited," Sandeep reveals.

The BodaPlus plant is located in Ruiru, off Kamiti rd, in Kiambu County within spacious and well-constructed Go-downs. "With my partners, we conducted further market research and found that there is an urgent need and a niche for good quality helmets and related accessories including chest guards, riders' suits, reflector vests, and riders' boots. Evidently these accessories promote the riders security, safety and integrity.

Consequently, BodaPlus Ltd was mooted in early 2020 as a brainchild of Sandeep and his partners.

According to Pavit Kenth, who joined BodaPlus in August 2022 as an investor and the CEO. After completion of the Business plan, the investors approached Car & General (C & G) Kenya Ltd seeking partnership seeing that the company was already actively involved in the motorcycles sector. C&G agreed to join the initiative and has so far invested Ksh 200 million (M) in the project. With the project sign off in November 2020 during the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the equipment was ordered and brought in between March & April 2021. Production started shortly afterwards and the first products of complete helmets were released into the market by June 2021.

BodaPlus manufactures two types of helmets namely the full, and open face helmets. While the open face exposes part of the face from the

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forehead or brow to the chin, the full face has an opening that leaves an allowance for the eyes, nose and covers the entire head to the chin area and is much preferred for enhanced safety.

According to Pavit, BodaPlus helmets have vents at the top and front that allow air circulation for better hygiene and comfort. They have an inner lining that makes them cool to

entire head but leaving allowance for the nose, mouth and chin. The adjustable visor is unbreakable and scratch-proof, and can be tinted; its function is to protect and covers the eyes by shielding them from any flying debris and wind. Below the chin and jaw, the helmets have straps which have been mechanically fastened to the helmet shell; this secures the helmet to the rider's head.

offer protection against shock and impact in crashes.

BodaPlus values safety and has introduced its flagship blue-tooth enabled helmets which allow riders to link with their mobile phones within 10 seconds of the phone ringing and allows them to talk up to 60 seconds without their physical handling of their phones. This is an innovation has indeed reduced the



wear and can be wiped clean to further enhance hygiene. The Company shall consider providing washable helmets inserts in the future to boost hygiene and overcome the general feeling that helmets are dirty and stuffy especially by motor bikes passengers who refuse to wear helmets at times.

"We produce a range of very safe, high impact, and light weight helmets compared to what is generally available in the market, Pavit explains to *SMEs Today Magazine*, in an exclusive tour of the plant. The complete helmet comprises the outer shell covering the entire head (full face) or the open face covering the

Pavit explains that helmets indeed have expiry dates ranging from 6 months to 1 year of use but depending on whether users and riders adhere to the correct use and application advice. "At BodaPlus, we provide helmets spare parts such as visors, straps and inner lining and we strictly discourage use of a helmet after a crash. Such helmets must be disposed or be returned for recycling assessment," he adds. He affirms that helmets can be 80 per cent recycled at the BodaPlus plant. The helmet, often painted or branded as per customers' request, is fitted with an EPS (expandable polystyrene) lining on the inside which is really what

phone- related accidents and mishaps on roads. Pavit confirms that some prominent foods delivery companies have recently bought their blue-tooth helmets for their delivery riders, this being a testament of the good reception of the innovation. Pavit explains that the helmet shell is made from PPCP (Polypropylene Copolymer) which make its high impact and very difficult to break and penetrate. Prices for the helmets ranges range from sh 550.00 with the finishes as requested by customers providing for prices differential.

Tour of the plant: Pavit and Navroop Rattia, BodaPlus' Plant Head,

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facilitated a tour of the Boda Plus Plant. Fume-less when heated, the raw materials are high-impact and engineering grade plastic which are imported from China in pellets form; these are fed into molding machines operated by competent Kenyans following past training by expatriates. The materials are heated and fed into a mold which produces the shell after which the shell is cooled and extracted.

"All of our products have been designed and developed from 3D CAD data; we focus on the aesthetics and functionality of the Helmet shell. We currently manufacture 90 per cent of our helmet inputs in house and over 80 per cent of the components can be recycled," explains Rattia.

"The first manufacturing stage is at the injection molding process where the granules are heated to over 200 degrees Celsius and then fed into the mold to form the shell; this is followed by cooling of the shell by passing water through the cavities within the mold. We carry out 100 per cent quality inspection and bad shells can be singled out and then get recycled," added Rattia.

"Depending on a customer's need or

request we can infuse color during the shell molding (either matt or gloss), we also offer high end finishes by applying paint to the shells.. Before the spray painting of the shells, we've to make the surfaces a bit rough to allow the paint to stick and we use special plastic paints," Rattia expounds at the Plant. After the manual spray painting the shells are placed in special ovens for 40 minutes for curing/drying of the paint and at this stage the shells are checked for good quality.

The shells can be painted in a variety of colors from white, orange, yellow to glossy black. "We paint a particular color each day for efficiency. We've noticed a preference for the variety of colors in the different regions of East Africa. While yellow is popular in Kenya, black is preferred in Tanzania, red in Uganda and blue in DRC," Rattia reveals. "We also offer branding customization where we can apply decals such as reflective stickers and the customers' brand name adds Rattia. As the molding of the shells continues, the other injection molding equipment continues to mold visors and all the other plastic components required to assemble a helmet. He reveals that the BodaPlus

Plant has employed over 110 people and hopes to have over 220 when it is fully operational. **The stitching department:** Here, the employees are 90 per cent women and they sew and stitch the lining that covers the EPS padding for comfort of the helmet wearers. Fabric with foam (in two sizes 2mm and 6mm) is used in stitching the inner comfort padding. While the 2mm fabric is mainly used for helmet inner sides, the 6 mm fabric is used for the forehead for the comfort of the wearer. "We can vary the thickness of the padding to adapt to a variety of head shapes and sizes," adds Rattia.

Manufacture of the protective EPS padding; The EPS protective padding is done for all helmets types. Rattia explains that steam, water and air are used in the EPS molding equipment. A boiler heats the water to high temperatures to produce steam that goes to the molding machine which in turn sucks the required size granules which are then molded through air pressure in the machine. This particular machine produces 8 EPS parts at a go. They then have to be dried for at least 12 hours before use. Rattia explains that the granules come in different sizes as per need and that it is the granules that eventually absorb impact when the helmets are in use. All the water used at this stage is recycled at a water recycling plant at the back of the plant and reused saving cost and also making the process environment-friendly. The space also uses the natural exhaust process without any need for mechanical extraction of air thus reducing power costs.

Assembly stage: after the shell manufacturing and painting, the next stage is assembly. Here, the bushes for holding the visors are placed and then the visors are screwed into the bushes followed by riveting of the straps. The riveting is strictly supervised to ensure full security