Steinmüller celebrates 60 years in Africa

Steam generation and high-pressure piping expert, Steinmüller Africa, celebrates 60 years of successful business in Africa.

With very humble beginnings after its registration as a South African business in 1962, Steinmüller Africa's sole African location was a post box in South Africa, which was checked only when the company's first managing director, Werner Oehler, passed through South Africa enroute to Australia from Germany. It was at this location that Steinmüller Africa received its first invitation to tender – an Eskom tender for its Grootvlei Power Station – which led to the company building its first African head office, just outside of the Grootvlei Power Station, in the 1970s.

Steinmüller has since conducted ongoing boiler and high-pressure piping maintenance at the Arnot, Camden, Duvha, Hendrina, Matimba, Kriel, Tuthuka, Matla, Majuba, Grootvlei and Komati power stations. Its milestones are many and the company's development is linked to South Africa's industrial growth. Forerunners of this development were the boiler plants built at the Hendrina, Kriel, Duvha, Thuthuka, Majuba, and Mathimba power stations from 1967 through to the early 1980s.

The 1990s saw Steinmüller Africa increase its South African footprint with the Sasol rejuvenation project, the replacement of boilers at Mossgas and the Iscor blast furnaces. It also expanded by undertaking work for the SAPPI Mill in Swaziland and conducting the refurbishment of the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO) plant.

The South African-based entity took its footprint to Europe where it was contracted to fabricate PF (pulverised fuel) boilers in Iskenderun, Turkey. Between 2004 and 2010, the company also undertook the return to service of mothballed plants at the Camden, Komati and Grootvlei power stations, and began fabrication of boilers and high-pressure pipework at these plants.

In addition to its work for ZISCO and the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), Steinmüller Africa has a footprint in Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia.

Moso Bolofo, Executive Director at Steinmüller Africa, says the company's progression has been directly linked to South Africa's industrial development. "Initially – in the early to mid-90s – our technical expertise was overseas-based and our offering to the African market largely based on our local capabilities." He adds that Steinmüller Africa now employs advanced engineering tools in its South African-based design office and has invested significantly in automated welding technologies at its fabrication facilities. "Both these developments are aligned to our drive to improve productivity, shorten lead times and be a premier utility boiler and steam piping service provider on the African continent," he says.

Industries that have benefitted from Steinmüller Africa's progression include power generation, pulp and paper, chemical and petrochemical, and mineral beneficiation. "Our growth and sustainability, however," says Bolofo, "have remained within the power generation and chemical sectors. "Our expertise focuses on steam generation and reticulation, with an emphasis on complex, efficient, high-temperature and high-pressure steam, meaning we are capable of providing solutions across the entire utility sector, where fuel efficiency is paramount."

Steinmüller Africa, which has supported the lion's share of leading power generation and chemical utilities in South Africa, was one of the earliest companies to undertake transformation and localisation activities in line with the B-BBEE scorecard, and has been a Level 1 contributor for the past several years. "We are proud to be a highly ethical organisation and a preferred employer in our sector," says Bolofo. "We have trained and produced a significant number of artisans and technicians for the South African industry."

In addition to its B-BBEE rating and local skills development, Steinmüller Africa has contributed significant funding to 24 tertiary institutions across Africa to benefit science and technology undergraduates.

"We have covered a great amount of ground over the past 60 years, both geographically and on the innovation front," Bolofo concludes. "We look forward to another 60 years of growth, to the betterment of our company, the communities in which we work, and the industrial sectors we serve."

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From humble beginnings in 1962, when Steinmüller Africa's presence in South Africa was a mere post box, the current Pretoria-based 30 000 m² facility under roof enables one million productive hours per year. The company also has workshops in Sasolburg and Bethal.

Steinmüller Africa's specialised induction bending solutions

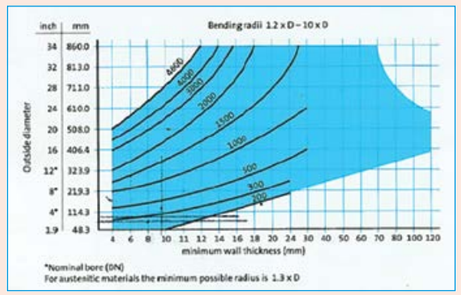
Steinmüller Africa holds the only Cojafex PB 850 induction bending machine in Africa. The machine was purchased in 2010 and, to date, has conducted over 6 300 induction bends on a local and international scale at its 30 000 m² manufacturing facility in Pretoria.

Induction bending reduces the required number of field welds, expedites construction and optimises project schedules. The cost and complexity of long-term maintenance is improved by reducing the number of welds that require regular inspections. Complex 3-dimensional bends are the real benefit of using induction bends in pipeline systems.

The machine can bend pipes with a minimum outside diameter of 48.3 mm and a maximum of 870 mm, with wall thicknesses of between of 4.0 mm and up to a maximum of 120 mm. Thicker walls can also be considered, pending specific technical details.

Steinmüller Africa offers its service to the paper and pulp, power, petrochemical, mining and metallurgical industries. Induction bending is especially beneficial for high-pressure (HP) piping, steam piping and industrial piping systems.

The company has almost ten thousand welding procedure specifications across a wide range of alloy materials. It is a specialist service provider across the fields of welding, environmental technology, manufacturing, maintenance, lifetime extension plans and project management.



Steinmüller's Cojafex PB 850 induction bending machine can conduct the pipe bending options indicated in the chart.