BVi Group’s growth since its inception in 1967 has been a remarkable one. The company was established as a multi-disciplinary engineering firm offering ‘traditional’ consulting engineering services in the fields of civil, structural, electrical and mechanical engineering. Today, the Level 2 BEE company has a 47% black ownership status and is 300 heads strong. Thanks to the success achieved at Kolomela, it is now capable of offering engineering, procurement and construction management (EPCM) services across its respective infrastructure fields. “This one single, but extremely significant project has provided us with the platform to further develop and continue with our newly established strategy: to become recognised as a true expert infrastructure EPCM contractor in the mining and industrial sectors,” explains Hennie Maas, BVi director of mining and EPCM projects.

Recent mining projects: Kolomela

“Our original contract at Kolomela included providing conventional consulting engineering skills, which we executed together with the owner’s team, but our contract evolved and we became further responsible for the project’s infrastructure EPCM services,” says Maas.

BVi was responsible for all bulk earthworks – moving in excess of 1.5 million cubic metres, dewatering the mining areas at a rate of 2 400 m³/h, prefabricated electrical substations (developed off-site in conjunction with Kumba), bulk fuel installation of 1.2 Mℓ of diesel and oils, heavy mining equipment workshops and all administrative buildings. “We were also responsible for a major engineering portion of the company’s housing project, with some 700 housing units in total. We also created dedicated procurement, health and safety, and planning departments to oversee and properly manage the workload. Although we provided safety resources to the project, we did not manage the safety aspects, but formed part of the...
Maas adds that one of the company’s greatest challenges was facilitating, managing and interfacing between at least 30 different contractors on site. “Interface and coordination management was a huge challenge and one of the major focus areas from a construction management point of view, as it is not easy to keep up with the required progress while interfacing between disciplines and working in a safe environment.”

Sishen ramp-up programme
BVi also played a significant role in the development of a new temporary bucket and bowl workshop at Kumba Iron Ore’s Sishen mine in the Northern Cape, which will see significant growth over the next eight years. This requires the injection of cash into the mine’s on-site infrastructure to support its development.

The growth of the current 12 x 4 km Sishen opencast pit necessitates additional haul trucks for overburden waste handling. With this in mind, the establishment of the new bucket and bowl workshop facility, completed in July 2012, caters to the maintenance and service requirements of the mine’s expanded haul truck fleet’s buckets and bowls. BVi Group was appointed as the design sub-contractor by overall project engineer TWP. Awarded in April 2011, the project took 14 months to complete.

Mayoko iron ore contract
BVi was most recently appointed the infrastructure contract for all infrastructure development at Exxaro’s Mayoko iron ore project in the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville). This appointment comprises all infrastructure studies and detailed design of the plant infrastructure, roads, construction camp, new personnel village, etc. Construction will commence in January 2013. “BVi was selected by Exxaro for this project based on its excellent mining infrastructure experience and the professional manner in which BVi projects are executed,” Maas notes.

In addition to mining
In terms of BVi’s traditional spectrum of engineering services, it currently has a reliable footprint across the country, enabling it to service almost all the districts and local councils countrywide. The company intends to increase its commitment and focus on local government by making use of an innovative project approach, including project finance models, Public-Private Partnerships and other asset management options. It is also constantly improving its green building department as well as its renewable energy delivery resources. BVi believes the future lies in renewable energy and is positioning itself accordingly. The company is further expanding across borders to service its fellow SADC members with much needed skills and infrastructure requirements. With regards to South Africa specifically, the company believes it has a significant role to play in assisting government in reaching its service delivery and aspirations.

The project is located in the south-west corner of the Republic of the Congo and is approximately 300 km north-east of the port city of Pointe-Noire. The area already has existing rail infrastructure, which is to be upgraded and a new port is planned for development. The project has a 121 Mt resource, but is targeted to increase this to more than 430 Mt. Long-term upside potential is more than two billion tonnes.

African strategy
“Thanks to our growing track record, we now truly know what we can achieve and we have our sights set on attaining EPCM work in the rest of Africa next,” Maas outlines. “We may have worked in conjunction with the owners’ team at Kolomela, but are ready to handle entire projects in-house.” The African continent is a hive of activity, particularly in the mining sector at present, but only those who have the cash to develop the necessary infrastructure will ‘get off the ground’.” For this reason, BVi believes its success will lead directly off the back of mining projects, as they comprise and form part of the original team responsible for a mining project’s development, from conception and feasibility onwards.

The company is looking to establish its presence in specifically in Namibia, Angola, the DRC, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi.