

ARCHITECTURE SYMBOLISING THE FUTURE



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Planning and consulting company Spacial Solutions commenced work in Rwanda almost four years ago. Two large projects are to be realised: the *Kigali Convention Complex* in the capital comprising a congress centre, a 5-star hotel, an office park and a museum – as well as a business and resort hotel on the shores of Lake Kivu.

Recently-founded architecture office, Spacial Solutions, was assigned the exciting task of developing designs and feasibility studies for five different projects at the end of 2005. Only a few weeks later, the foundation work was presented to Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame. In the ensuing three and a half years, the Munich-based architecture office has drafted two of the five project concepts in more detail. In April 2009, the building contract for construction of the *Kigali Convention Complex* was signed between the building client Ultimate Concepts Ltd. and the Chinese general contractor BCEG.

Economic and environmental sustainability

The projects aim to reflect the rich but somewhat buried culture of Rwanda. Development of the *Kigali Convention Complex* will contribute to shaping a symbol for the country's identity and its integration within the international community, together with a number of other building projects, ranging from the construction of prestigious buildings to infrastructure including roads, power stations, water treatment plants, schools and much more. Economic and environmental sustainability are the cornerstone of the planning process, and the tasks for all those involved go beyond the usual degree of planning and construction – as working in Rwanda also becomes a valuable exercise in international knowledge transfer.

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INTERVIEW

A FEELING OF HAVING COME HOME

Spacial Solutions' project manager, Carolin Holzheid, talks about her thrilling experiences in a fascinating country.

Ms Holzheid, you are often in Rwanda because of your project responsibilities. What are your impressions of how the country is developing? What is the attitude of the locals towards you and what is it like working with them?

A lot has changed since our first trip to Kigali, and growth and development are playing a very important role. In more than 60 trips to Rwanda, we have seen a change every time. The country is developing at an incredible pace and you can feel a real spirit of optimism. Infrastructure is being established, new roads built, petrol stations opened. The number of places to shop is increasing, parks and green spaces are being created, as are schools, while the universities are growing and offering new subjects. Offices are being built and public authorities set up. Structures are developing – something new is growing or springing up in so many places. The country, which has few raw materials, is building on existing and newly-acquired expertise and service offerings, while acting in an environmentally-sensitive way. For example, plastic bags are banned as packaging across the whole of Rwanda. Regardless of the situation or where we are, the people of Rwanda have been unbelievably polite and helpful towards us. Their friendly and open manner makes us feel as though we have 'come home' again.

And did we provide you with good support in your use of think project!?

From the moment we accepted the task of general planner for large

projects in Africa, it was clear that our five-person architecture office would have to change. We had to expand rapidly in all directions to rise to the challenge and develop clear structures, good organisation and build our expertise. So we set about building a strong team of wonderful architects and a dynamic group of design specialists – and chose think project! to ensure the best possible information flow and data exchange.

The consulting team was there to assist us and we always felt we had plenty of support. The use of an online collaboration and document control platform helped us enormously in our work and greatly simplified project documentation. On the deadline for submitting our final plans, the think project! consulting team was available to us overnight, providing support and ensuring that data transfers ran perfectly. We can't imagine working on a project of this size without think project! now.

What concrete advantages does think project! offer you in your work?

In the *Kigali Convention Complex*, 55 project participants were already involved in the planning phase, including 13 subcontractors and 10 other partners involved in planning, such as the external construction manager who runs the project office in Kigali.

The greatest advantage of think project! was that we could guarantee rapid, seamless exchange of project documents. Each of the 20 or so planning teams had access to the most current plans at all times. In addition, the simple, intuitive way in which think project! works ensured that all involved recognised it as a tool that simplified their work, so were always happy to use it.