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PROJECT MANAGEMENT EXPERTS *INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS* TURNS CHALLENGES WITHIN AFRICA INTO EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

Cape Town, South Africa - Project management company, *Integrated Solutions*, is at the forefront of infrastructure development in both South Africa and the African continent. The successful completion of a four star hotel establishment project in Sierra Leone is just one example of how the company overcame the difficulties and challenges with working on the continent.

Integrated Solutions manages and monitors all phases of any construction project, including the organisation of the required resources and consultants. The services offered range from project and construction management, and even extend to cost control and interior design.

Says Evert Lategan, MD of *Integrated Solutions*: "It's great that South African companies like *Integrated Solutions* are given the opportunities to work in Africa. Working in many of the developing countries has its own set of obstacles and challenges, ranging from difficulties with procurement and sourcing the right materials to completing construction on time against tight deadlines. Our proven methodologies and specialist expertise has meant that we have been able to register a number of successes – such as the Mammy Yoko Hotel in Sierra Leone."

The Mammy Yoko Hotel – Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Mammy Yoko Hotel in the capital city of Freetown (re-branded as the Mammy Yoko Radisson Blu) is a 172-key multi-storey establishment, which was abandoned during the Sierra Leone civil war, first occupied by rebel soldiers and then reoccupied by the United Nations.

Empowering local contractors through on-site training, supervision and guidance

Lategan says that as Sierra Leone has no main contractors available who could have been slotted underneath the project on an organisational level, they had to adopt a methodology that proved highly effective in managing site activities and achieving project milestones. As potential main contractors had little or no experience in hotel refurbishment, construction management issues were overcome by employing a multitude of various artisans who ensured that the construction works were implemented. With increased supervision and quality control measures in place, excellent standards of quality and workmanship were achieved. *Integrated Solutions* provided the correct training, supervision and guidance throughout the duration of the project.

Bridging the language gap and shoring up performance

"Even language barriers were overcome by site staff learning the basics of the local dialect and making use of local translators when necessary. Local workers, used to slow paced construction, proved their worth by the introduction of incentives. The

lack of local technical know-how was overcome by introducing expatriate consultants,” says Lategan.

Building partnerships with suppliers on the ground

“In order to create as many local jobs as possible, local general workers were employed, also allowing for skills transfer,” said Lategan. Critical to the project success was forging the right relationships amongst all the major local suppliers. Such partnerships proved crucial in securing the right materials and labour that could meet the stringent project standards.

“Additional stock required was offset by site management making use of all redundant materials on site and remaking this to create the necessary items. For the duration of the project, *Integrated Solutions* adopted regulations in line with South African and British standards to ensure that installation would comply with all safety and minimum requirements. Although *Integrated Solutions* had to overcome these major challenges, we’re proud that we were able to successfully complete and handover a four star establishment of an international standard,” says Lategan.

***Integrated Solutions’* local footprint in South Africa**

In South Africa, *Integrated Solutions* (who specialise in the refurbishment of hotels) also recently completed the upgrade and refurbishment of the Beacon Island Lifestyle Resort in Plettenberg Bay and the Cabana Beach Resort in Umhlanga (on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast).

A fast track approach for the refurbishments was successfully implemented for these two landmark hotel projects - a first for South Africa where project management, construction management and cost control were spearheaded by *Integrated Solutions*.

The Beacon Island Lifestyle Resort project incorporated a complete shutdown of the complex over an 11-week period. The refurbishment included 200 rooms, as well as the upgrade of all public areas, electrical and plumbing infrastructure, as well as the replacement of all windows. Even a paraplegic facility was added. The full project was completed in 77 days, with a 100% occupancy rate on the day of completion.

The Cabana Beach Resort upgrade entailed the gutting and makeover of 217 apartments that incorporated 441 bathrooms. The schedule of work included electrical, plumbing, air-conditioning, new ceilings, carpets and the skimming of walls. The entire refurbishment was completed in 84 days. Both of these projects were completed on time, on budget and with the necessary attention to detail to maintain the high standards expected by the client (Tsogo Group).

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

What sets *Integrated Solutions* apart is their work methodology, which is based on the principle of value engineering, finding the perfect balance between functionality and cost, which enables them to ensure that every project gets maximum value for the capital investment made. *Integrated Solutions* understands the uniqueness of each project, which is why they provide tailor-made solutions, including harnessing a team of professional consultants best suited for the project, sourcing contractors that can best execute the project, and finally design solutions that are practical, build-friendly and of importance, cost-effective.

Thorough investigation, analysis and planning enable them to accurately forecast the budget, deliver the project within the timeframe, ensure that changes and variations are minimised, and cultivate a professional team environment. In-depth, upfront investigation and costing of the project are of utmost importance.

Integrated Solutions is involved in all aspects of the project, from project management, financial management, and quality control to managing every pre-approved supplier. They work with multiple contractors and suppliers, directly appointed by their clients. *Integrated Solutions* approach design critically and believe that it must be cost-effective and add value where it is needed. Small design changes can often have a considerably positive impact on the bottom-line, which is why they investigate all options.