

WSP Grows its Facilities Management Business in Nigeria

WSP Facilities Management has identified Nigeria as the single biggest market in Africa for its services outside of South Africa. That's according to WSP Facilities Management's Hamish McLennan, who says that WSP Group Africa is one of the few engineering firms in the West African country to offer a full consulting engineering service in addition to its facilities management offering.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and its largest city is Lagos <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagos>> , where WSP-FMC shares an office with three other WSP operating companies – WSP Developments, WSP Consulting and WSP Energy Management.

Nigeria has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and is a key player in the international oil industry and a member of OPEC. As can be expected, the country has seen enormous growth over the past few years. It also has a rapidly evolving telecommunications market and a highly developed financial services sector, all of which have premises in the major centres. McLennan adds, "There is increasing emphasis on maintaining fixed assets and that is just one of the offerings that WSP Facilities Management has in its portfolio. We would like to expand our services beyond maintenance management and our intention is to make available a wider range of stand alone products, while also offering a turnkey service where there is demand for it."

McLennan says, "WSP is very well established in Nigeria, we have a good presence in Lagos and are well respected in a country where there is just not enough capacity to deliver on the number of development projects that are planned for the region. As an international brand, WSP has a reputation for delivering projects on time and within budget."

In addition to a general skills shortage, Nigeria also faces the dual challenges to development of ongoing energy shortages and a generally inadequate infrastructure. Playing its role in addressing the skills shortage, WSP has established mentorship programmes that benefit Nigerian engineers and project managers, enabling them to gain experience on some of the most prestigious projects in their own country.

Waste management presents problems in Lagos and other major Nigerian cities, which are linked with economic development, population growth and the inability of municipal councils to manage the resulting rise in industrial and domestic waste. All developments therefore need their own water treatment and sewerage treatment plants on site, as well as their own energy supply. The maintenance of generators plays a major role in WSP-FMC's day to day operations as without their own power supply, businesses cannot operate in Nigeria.

The procurement of materials is also a challenge as practically everything has to be imported into Nigeria. An understanding of local logistics is essential as some items appear on imported goods banned lists, making it virtually

impossible to bring them into Nigeria. This, combined with an extremely congested port and the country's poor infrastructure, poses a huge challenge to the local construction industry. McLennan says that WSP is in the process of addressing the supply chain issue to improve the accessibility of materials in the future.

However, its global footprint renders WSP well experienced in dealing with the above-mentioned and other challenges that may present themselves.

WSP-FMC has been operating in Nigeria since 2003 and prior to that as FMC by the founding members, all of whom are Nigerian professionals. However, in the past year, WSP-FMC has seen tremendous growth in the facilities sector as the main institutions realised that facilities were not part of their core business, and began seeking engineering management companies to outsource this function to.

Major retail contracts undertaken by WSP-FMC include the Shoprite Group and Game, while in the financial services sector the facilities management operation is currently employed by Citi Bank, Bank PHB, Standard IBTC, while discussing further contracts with a number of other banking groups. Entering the banking sector has allowed WSP-FMC to spread its coverage of Nigeria to other cities and towns nationwide, and the company can now be found in eight towns and cities around the country. WSP-FMC is also targeting the burgeoning telecommunications market and industrial organisations that are opening up shop in Nigeria.

WSP-FMC is also contracted to prime residential apartment buildings around Lagos. These are the top end real estate complexes, and in the commercial sector, including Protea, Novotel and Sun International Hotels. The firm has been appointed to manage the facilities of several local developments being undertaken by the WSP Group upon their completion. McLennan points out, "This is where WSP sets itself apart from its peers. It can not only help its clients to develop a project from the very outset of the development, it can also manage the property once it is completed."

"We see a large growth pattern as companies are now realising there is a professional company in Nigeria that can take care of their non-core functions, professionally, with a full technical back up and support from the global WSP Group," concludes McLennan.

*** Reference:** www.wikipedia.org/wiki/nigeria

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WSP Group plc is a global design, engineering and management consultancy, specialising in projects for the property, transport and environment sectors.

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Winner of the 2008 Sustainable Consultant of the Year Award.

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