

Civicon. Positioning for the Future.

We featured Civicon last year regarding their role as one of the major players in the mechanical and civil engineering industry and a leader in Cranage, Erection and specialised transport. A proactive company with a strong belief in the development of skills enhancement, they have continued to influence the rise and growth of the industry's standards within the country of Kenya.



Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year as one of the largest engineering firms in Sub-Saharan Africa, Civicon has been involved in iconic projects in the region, including working under some of the harshest conditions to build roads in war-torn South Sudan for the World Food Program.

What makes Civicon different is how it has refined the art of doing business in underpenetrated areas and delivering where many engineering firms don't have the expertise or the skills to carry out the work.

Under the group company TransCentury, Civicon runs a technical training program in conjunction with technical schools in the region. The programme is aimed at improving the quality of technical skill in the region and bridging the gap that currently exists as some specialised skills are sought from outside the Sub-Saharan.

There has always been a spirit of innovation at Civicon and each office in their wide African footprint is a reflection of this. Their Uganda office is a fine example, originally set up as a transit point for their trucking business to enable logistical support for the vehicles that were primarily transporting food aid from Kenya to Southern Sudan for the United Nations. To meet this need they registered the company and set up in Kampala with an office and a yard. However, they were awarded an additional contract to work with IDP, the Internally Displaced Peoples camps, to transport food aid into Northern Uganda.

This proved a prestigious move as it gave them an opportunity for substantial growth. To meet demand they established bases in Lira, Gulu, Pader, Kitgum and Bundibugyo in the West as well as developing a novel design for the fleet of 40-foot semi-trailer trucks that allowed them to be ultra-competitive in the market place without sacrificing any of their potential to complete the tasks.

Jason explains that the business and market is vibrant: a number of key milestones are being achieved in the market, and all need engineering expertise such as power generation, **“The region of East Africa is on a major drive to increase access to power to all and reduce the cost. This means construction of power plants, transmission lines and substations.”**

Civicon believes in the development of local workers to help develop the ongoing growth of the economies of the countries where they work. Valuable experience is available for local tradesmen, including working on construction projects for fuel heavyweights like Total and Shell.

“We have 2000 employees deployed in various projects,” Jason says, “And training is on an on-going basis, especially Health and Safety, which is a key element in the projects we undertake.”

As a diverse organisation, employees have the opportunity to work in a company that has the stability and control of the entire supply chain with their considerable in-house resources. They also have the opportunity to contribute to projects that work on a turnkey basis, allowing exposure to the entire layout of a project instead of just a single facet. For clients, this eliminates the need to juggle the management of multiple contractors on site and for employees, it gives them the chance to gel and communicate better as a team.

As a major transporter on- and off-road in East and Central Africa, Civicon is ideally positioned to provide superior logistical support to their projects. A prime example of this is the work they do for various breweries around East Africa. Arriving in one piece, storage vessels imported from European countries pose an interesting logistical problem, requiring the use of tailor-made low loaders to transport them to their end location. Once there they are offloaded by a crane or gantry, Civicon constructs the foundations for the vessels and even proceed with piping and ensuring the vessels meet QA/QC requirements.

Civicon places emphasis on the quality and timely delivery of work, a focus that sets them apart from the competition. Working regularly in the oil industry has instilled the concept of Quality Control as an integral part of the delivery requirements of a project in their corporate culture. Their QA/QC department tracks quality at all stages of a project's lifetime, from receiving materials to the necessary NDE (Non Destructive Examination) of the welded joints during construction, ensuring the company complies with the specifications and procedures required.

In amongst a number of projects that Civicon is involved with at any time, one stands out as the most exciting. A project that has been backed by the President of Kenya himself, the Lake Turkana wind project headed by the Lake Turkana Wind Power Company:

“This is the biggest wind farm in Sub Saharan Africa and we are building a 300 km stretch of road that is essential for the logistics,” he says proudly, “With targeted completion come April 2016.”

Wind power is a big interest for Kenya and this project will be adding 20% to the national grid and forms part of is part of Vision 2030 for Kenya to add an additional 500MW by 2017 so the wind farm plays a big part in that.

“What is happening in the region is exciting, and we are ensuring that we are well positioned to take part in the iconic projects taking off in the region. There is no better time to be an engineering company in Sub-Saharan Africa than now!”