



PRESS RELEASE.

REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE STATE OF SPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE AT AQUATIC CENTRE AND GRIFFIN SAENDA IN-DOOR SPORTS COMPLEXES.

1.0 Introduction

The Ministry of Youth and Sports embarked on a project to construct the Aquatic Centre at Kamuzu Institute for Sports, and the Griffin Saenda Indoor Sports Complex at the Bingu National Stadium from the year 2021, with the aim of hosting the Regional 5 youth Games which were scheduled to take place from 2nd to 11th December 2022.

The project was financed by the Malawi Government through Treasury Department. at MK8.2 Billion for the Aquatic Centre and MK7 Billion for the Griffin Saenda Indoor Sports Complex. Project Managers were the Department of Buildings from the Ministry of Transport and Public Works and the nation successfully hosted the games.

Around the first week of January 2023, the social media in the country was awash with a video clip showing some interlocking blocks that had subsided around the perimeter of the swimming pool at the newly constructed Aquatic Centre located at Kamuzu Institute for Sports. There was also another clip earlier which showed water leakages through the gable ends at the Griffin Saenda Indoor Sports Complex during the course of the games.

Following the above public concerns on the state of the two newly constructed facilities, a Joint Technical Committee ('The JTC'), comprising Architects, Engineers and Quantity Surveyors from Board of Architects and Quantity Surveyors; Malawi Engineering Institution; Malawi Institute of Architects and the Surveyors Institute of Malawi was set up to investigate the issue.

The JTC visited the two sites on 11 January 2023 in the presence of officials from the Ministry of Youth and Sports; the Department of Buildings; the National Construction Industry Council (NCIC); and the contractors for each of the sites (China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation for the Aquatic Sports Complex and China Railway 20 for Griffin Saenda Indoor Sports Complex).

2.0 Findings

The following were the key findings made by the JTC:

2.1 Findings Common to both the Aquatic Centre and Griffin Saenda In-door Sports Complexes

- a) The project followed the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) Malawi Government Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2003 as a form of contract.
- b) The Ministry of Youth and Sports faced a penalty of US\$8.00 Million if it failed to host the games in the year 2022. This was 20 years after an initial notice to host the games was issued to Malawi.
- c) The project planning was poor and that led to several avoidable scenarios. There was no clear 'Project Brief' nor Approved Detailed Designs at the commencement of the construction.
- d) The projects also faced timeline challenges due to supply chain interruptions as a result of Covid-19 and also unavailability of adequate forex.
- e) Construction commenced using designs that had not yet been approved by the Lilongwe City Council Planning Committee. This sets a bad precedence as planning approvals are not meant for rubber stamping rather, they provide a window to the much-needed stakeholder input as well as incorporation of acceptable designs in the urban space. Obtaining a planning approval would have helped to highlight the incomplete designs and perhaps avoid some variations.
- f) Upon realizing that the projects could not meet the 30 November 2022 deadline, the Project Managers decided to prioritize components of the project which were critical to hosting the December 2022 Region 5 Youth Games and reschedule the remaining ones to the post-games period.
- g) On the day of the visit by the JTC, the Aquatic Sports Complex was about 60% complete and the Griffin Saenda In-door Sports Complex was about 80% complete. That was after the games had taken place.
- h) A new deadline of 30 June 2023 for the whole project was set much as there was no formal documentation on the extension for the project.
- i) The project had suffered a lot of changes and work variations that unfortunately were not yet priced at the time the JTC visited the sites. This has potential to expose the client to higher claims and may lead to contract disputes.

2.2 Findings Specific to the Aquatic Sports Complex

- a) Following the decision made in **2.1(f)** above, an already excavated site earmarked for another swimming pool was back-filled and was not properly compacted.
- b) Certain sections of the surfaces paved with interlocking blocks were sinking.
- c) The video clip that was in circulation on social media related to an area around one swimming pool. The interlocking blocks were placed on top of a fill material

- which was not adequately compacted. The subsidence of the interlocking blocks was caused by a loaded truck that had passed through the said section of work.
- d) Poor quality interlocking blocks were used. The project team indicated that these were temporary and would be replaced. It may be possible that the base was also temporarily fixed hence lapses in compaction.

2.3 Findings Specific to Griffin Saenda In-door Sports Complex

The JTC noted that high level windows were not closed due to uncompleted mechanical ventilation facilities. The open sections provided conventional ventilation, however they provided easy access to rainwater into the complex. It was not clear whether the client was moving away from mechanical ventilation due to costs or whether the section was open due to delays that the project had faced. Nevertheless, the cause of the leakages was identified as not being a structural failure on the part of the building.

3.0 Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the JTC recommends the following:

- a) Speedy decision making in project approval processes. Implementing agencies should allow ample project execution time to avoid working under panic. The delays in decision making resulted in 20 years of time lost, which was more than enough to have the works properly planned and executed.
- b) That a Cost Report should be quickly worked out to establish the quantum in monetary terms of the variations as further changes may flout provisions of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets regulations.
- c) All Designs to be approved by the Local Authorities as a compliance requirement. Failure to have designs or buildings approved by designated authorities, delegated or otherwise, may be a recipe for disaster as not only does the anomaly flout the planning guidelines and public health requirements but also creates a very bad precedence for public infrastructure.
- d) It is also critical for the Project Team to clearly identify temporary works and defects resulting from poor workmanship. The categorization will be vital when it comes to payment for temporary works and client's claim for defective works. That will safeguard the client from paying the contractor for shoddy works that need to be aborted and done to specification.
- e) Usage of the facilities, either partially completed or not, must be supported by a certificate of occupation from the city council. The proof for a certificate of occupation was not available for our team to confirm that it existed at the time of undertaking this investigation.
- f) A review of the Buildings Department's capacity and mandate to handle projects of this magnitude. On the other hand, the Department of Buildings as a

Government Department should ideally focus on policy issues for the construction sector.

Direct involvement of the Department of Buildings in construction activities, specifically playing the role of consultants in some government projects puts the National Construction Industry Council (NCIC) as a construction sector regulator in a difficult position when it comes to policing the sector.

4.0 Conclusion

The defects in circulation on social media related to temporary works and are not a danger to the structural integrity of the facilities. It should however be noted that no structural tests were conducted by the investigating team due to limited time and costs.

The JTC notes that despite the defects relating to temporary works, several elements as aforementioned, within the projects demonstrate a lack of adherence to professional standards.

The JTC wishes to emphasize that this is not an audit report of the project, but does point to matters that require attention by those charged with responsibility on the project.

Efforts to obtain written comments of the findings from the Project Team proved futile.

The JTC is grateful to the project team, the professional bodies involved and the public for information shared and the trust to have this task undertaken

For more information, please contact any of the following:

- **Arch. Miranda Mulaga**; Phone # 099 5 949 032, Email: mmulaga@greenarchmw.com
- **QS Martin Chimangeni**; Phone # 099 5 477 957, Email: info@realconassociates.com
- **Arch. Catherine Sani**; Phone # 099 9 273 493, Email: ca-san@live.com
- **Eng. Arthur Wengawenga**; Phone #099 9 956 821, Email: awengawenga@mei.org.mw