

Subject: Mbewa Project

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From: "B.T Synod" <btsynod@malawi.net>

To: Iain Smith <ismithipa@aol.com>

Dear Iain

Greetings and compliments of the season. Unknown to me the accounted has proceeded on leave and left quite some work for me un completed. This is the reason why you have not been given the schedules he promised. This is unsatisfactory and your disappointment is justified as much as I am. However that is not going to side track me from the work ahead to complete the sanitation at the school and in the village.

I consulted widely on the issue of confiscating Watec property. The issue becomes legal and to safeguard the integrity of the Synod and BSDC it would rather be done by the legal authorities than ourselves. Even then there are uncertainties as to whether we could recover everything and it could be at an extra cost too us. The best course of action by some reasonable consensus was to put more pressure on Watec to complete the work at no extra cost to us.

That is exactly what I have done. I threatened them with confiscation of property. Since then they responded by secretly ferrying material to site and mobilizing staff. I have given them a deadline of Saturday 23rd to mobilize all the materials. Another deadline I have imposed is completion of the toilets by 4th January before school opens. We have a site meeting planned for Saturday at the school. I have already told them about our plans and that we are ready to implement immediately should we prove that they are still playing tricks.

I realize this is putting too much trust on Watec who have let us down so much before. However if it comes through, which I think it will this time because they are scared of the repercussions, it will save us the hustle of having to chase them around later to recover our money, an exercise that may not bear the desired outcome. At the same time we can spare the money we have for its intended purposes.

For what it is worth they say that their rig will be operational before next week. I am leaving that for early next year as agreed. Priority is to get the sanitation out of the way. Not much of a comfort but just to keep you briefed. As soon as the accountant is in around the 8th January I will press him for the breakdown of expenses etc.

Best regards

Jerry

Dear Jerry

Thank you for your note. Sadly the report, which is the first since I visited, is short of the vital detail necessary to understand the current project status. There is no detailed report on what progress has been made since WATEC are supposedly back on site. What have they been doing, what have they achieved, what are the plans for the next month what are the up to date project costs and where are you up to in recovering monies from them. The lack of this detail may suggest that we are drifting with little direction, no targets nor any sense of urgency. It is the role of the BSDC to ensure that is not the case.

You put me in a difficult position when reports are limited in detail and are not regularly available. Surprising though it may seem, our sponsors are interested in a successful outcome for this project. However, unless you can demonstrate you are doing a professional job they will be reluctant to make further investments.

In detail, my comments and what answers I need to have

1. School Sanitation

- Are the girls' toilets fully complete. Have the design scope and standards been met? Are they waterproof? Does the vent system work? Have curtains or doors been provided for each toilet? Is there a cleaning regime, who is responsible for this? Are hand washing facilities in place and have the children been given hygiene training?
- On the boys toilets what is the current work status. Is the pit dry? Do we have the necessary bricks available to start construction? If not have we resolved the supply issues with the villagers. Do we have all the other materials available? What's the programme to complete this work? Where do we anticipate being at the end of this month?

2. **Village Sanitation** How many toilets units are complete across each village? How many are in preparation. What work is ongoing with the village heads to increase the uptake by householders? Have we as yet made contact with District officials to put pressure on the village heads to increase uptake? The project scope was for 1000 units, how are we to achieve that target? Where are we up to in the provision of hygiene training? What impact have the various schemes had on the incidence of disease? Are the local health officials monitoring disease levels?

3. **Boreholes** Are these continuing to operate satisfactorily. What breakdowns have we had? Are hygiene standards being maintained at a satisfactory level? Have the villagers received training yet on the maintenance and operation of the borehole pumps. Have Watec provided spares for these pumps? Are these on site and secure? What has happened to the other pump equipment Watec purchased? Do the BSDC have this in their possession yet?

4. **Costs** This situation is totally frustrating. The undated cost figures you sent me are those, which we used at our discussions in November. I need up to date figures. I have been asking for these and the transactional record of the BSDC IPA account from the opening of the account to the present time since November. So far you have been unable or unwilling to provide this information. This sort of

data is fundamental to the management of the project. BSDC have to be able to demonstrate to sponsors that you are properly tracking and controlling costs. Your reputation depends on providing timely and accurate management information. At the moment, my judgment is that you are unable to do that. Without accurate data, we are unable to make proper decisions in managing the project. Shortly we will need to take a view on how we can best provide water to the school site and Gibson village. To do that we need to be clear how we stand financially.

5. **Reports** Our agreement with BSDC is that we would receive monthly reports outlining progress, future targets and up to date cost information. This is not being done. It reflects badly on your credibility as a development agency. I don't know what the problem is but I suspect it is resources. The Synod need urgently to fix it if you are to be successful. For our project, we know we cannot trust WATEC so they need to be tightly controlled against realistic targets otherwise there will be continued drift and we will never achieve positive outcomes.
6. **Shallow Well Proposal.** Worth pursuing, provides certainty of supply at the school but could be expensive and open to external interference. Some additional questions on the proposed design for you to take up with the consultant.
 - Which company is working on this. What the company's expertise and track record in this area and what are the terms of engagement
 - Have the local community been involved in any discussions about pipes being run from the well to Gibson village and the school?
 - Are the pipes to be surface run or buried? What sizes are we talking of. How will we ensure they will not be vandalised, damaged, stolen
 - What maintenance is required for such a system and who would be responsible for this.
 - What is the risk of contamination of the spring and how pure is the spring water. What is the water flow rate from the spring.
 - Looking ahead would this company have the capability to undertake the construction works
 - As we discussed, have you talked to the Water authorities about a pipeline from the main Mulanje supply line to Nansato School

You will need time to digest this. I will talk to you next week about your reaction and when I may expect a response

Best regards

Iain