

Local solutions to enhance the quality of life

Nairobi, September 7, 2017 - Sustainability in building is rapidly gaining significance in the Middle East Africa region - particularly among female professionals and young graduates in architecture and engineering. This was clearly seen at the prize-handover ceremony for the regional LafargeHolcim Awards in Nairobi, Kenya. The majority of the 12 prize-winning projects dealt with education and the contemporary promotion of traditional manual skills.

The LafargeHolcim Awards is about more than just beautiful buildings and stands out as the world's most significant competition in sustainable design. The criteria of the USD 2 million competition are as challenging as sustainability is itself. In addition, the competition acknowledges only projects, not finished work. That's because the LafargeHolcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction, which is responsible for the Awards, seeks designs that go beyond current standards and deliver new, surprising, or truly visionary solutions to the way we build.

Prizes help make common sense become commonplace

This idea has caught on - and the momentum of interest among architects, engineers, urban planners, and developers proves that sustainability has become embedded as "common sense" in the construction industry. The fifth cycle of the competition attracted 5,085 entries from authors in 121 countries. 3,606 entries were deemed valid and more than half of these passed the pre-screening phase. They advanced to the qualitative assessment by five independent expert juries in the competition regions Europe, North America, Latin America, Middle East Africa, and Asia Pacific. The juries evaluated the projects based on the five "target issues" for sustainable construction set forth by the LafargeHolcim Foundation - principles which define sustainability in a holistic way.

More young participants than ever before

Prizes are awarded in two categories. The Next Generation category for students and professionals up to 30 years of age has become increasingly popular. The category seeks visionary projects and bold ideas, and gives young professionals public exposure and a platform to achieve recognition. For the first time in the history of the LafargeHolcim Awards, more projects were submitted in the Next Generation category than in the main category - showing just how future-oriented the competition is.

The main Awards category is open for professionals to showcase sustainable responses to technological, environmental, socioeconomic and cultural issues affecting

contemporary building and construction. The LafargeHolcim Awards Gold, Silver, and Bronze as well as Acknowledgement prizes are handed over in each region. The Gold, Silver and Bronze winners from each region will compete for the Global LafargeHolcim Awards in 2018.

Building to fight poverty

Although construction is a globalized industry with intensive exchange across continents, significant differences were seen between the projects in each region. "In Middle East Africa, poverty is one of the main issues," says Sarah Nichols, representative of the Academic Committee of the LafargeHolcim Foundation. Jury member and civil engineer Mohsen Ech adds: "Here we have areas with almost no level of education, regions where building materials are difficult to acquire, and zones in conflict." Many project authors responded to these challenges by developing innovative and local solutions to improve the quality of life in the immediate environment.

The importance of the competition in promoting the work of women in sustainable construction was also consolidated. Nagwa Sherif, architecture professor from the American University in Cairo and head of the independent jury for Middle East Africa, pointed out that a striking majority of the 670 valid projects in this region were designed by female professionals - not only in the Next Generation but also in the main Awards category.

Gold Award: Combining spiritual tradition and modern knowledge in Niger

Knowledge is power. With their project, Mariam Kamara and Yasaman Esmaili from the USA aim to create a platform for passing on such knowledge to the inhabitants of the region around Dandaji village in Niger. They propose transforming a mosque into a library. A new mosque in the immediate vicinity is intended to weave together spiritual tradition and modern technical development. "The close engagement with the social and built fabric of the village creates an intelligent reinterpretation of tradition that is very much at home in the project's context," said the jury.

Silver Award: Promoting traditional trade skills in Morocco

Fatima-azzahra Bendahmane from Morocco proposes a multi-generation complex in Aït Benhaddou in Morocco for training young people and promoting local manual skills. The building, to be constructed with the simplest of

traditionally rooted methods and materials, houses a school for children and an artisan training center. "By explicitly incorporating the craft traditions that the project aims to advance, the building's construction actively cultivates its own program," said the jury.

Bronze Award: School for refugees in Lebanon

Innumerable Syrian children currently inhabit the refugee camps of Lebanon. Joana Dabaj, Riccardo Conti and Matteo Zerbi of CatalyticAction in Lebanon aim to engage with these children and help prepare them for life after relocation. They propose taking an abandoned pavilion from Expo 2015 in Milan and transforming it into a "schoolhouse" for children at the Jarahieh Informal Tented Settlement in the El Marj, Lebanon. "The project provides not only space for education but also a dignified environment as a source of pride for the community who helped to build it," praised the jury.

Acknowledgement prizes: Improving the lives of people

Four projects in each region receive an Acknowledgement prize. Wonjoon Han, Sookhee Yuk and Gahee Van from South Korea developed new architectural structures to enhance the viability of shea butter processing in Ghana. The team of TAMassociati from Italy is giving the African continent and artistic voice that will be heard around the world through their building for Maisha Film Labs in Kampala, Uganda. At the campus of the Miracle for Africa Foundation in Lilongwe, Malawi, Steven Holl from the USA proposes a new library to be built by the local workforce. Finally, Andrew Amara from Uganda is planning a new children's department in the Center for Nodding Disease in Odek, Uganda.

Next Generation prizes: The future is in their hands

The first of four Next Generation prizes in the region went to Heidi van Eeden from South Africa. She is developing new sustainable methods of brickmaking in Soshanguve township, South Africa. The second prize went to Nour Madi, Jad Melki and Ghaith Abi Ghanem from Lebanon. They are investigating ways of rebuilding the war-ravaged city of Aleppo in Syria using the rubble of destroyed buildings. Nada Nafeh from Egypt received the third prize in this category. With her project, she aims to improve living conditions in informal settlements in Cairo. The fourth prize went to Noor Marji of Jordan. She proposes a monumental terraced learning center in Amman, Jordan.

From project to reality in Burkina Faso

Many of the awarded projects ultimately end up being constructed or produced - over half of the prize-winning projects from the four previous competition cycles have been or will be built in the near future. This fact is underscored by the LafargeHolcim Building Better Recognition, which is being awarded for the first time in 2017. It honors a prize-winning project from a previous competition cycle that is a particularly successful example of sustainable construction, has been built and stood the test of time. In Middle East Africa, this accolade went to Francis Kéré from Germany for his school building in Burkina Faso, which won the Global LafargeHolcim Award Gold in 2012. In his motivating and candid speech at the Awards ceremony in Nairobi, Francis Kéré affirmed that sustainable construction requires an attitude that goes well beyond design and makes a difference for future generations.

For more information about the LafargeHolcim Awards 2017, the jury members and the prize-winning projects, including high-resolution images, visit www.lafargeholcim-foundation.org

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LafargeHolcim Awards winning projects Middle East Africa

LafargeHolcim Awards Gold 2017 Middle East Africa

Religious and secular complex, Dandaji, Niger: A reinterpretation of traditional local construction for a new mosque and community center, creating a space in the village open to all.

By Mariam Kamara, atelier masomi, Providence, RI, USA and Niamey, Niger; and Yasaman Esmaili, studio chahar, Seattle, USA

LafargeHolcim Awards Silver 2017 Middle East Africa

Elementary school and craft training center, Aït Benhaddou, Morocco: A learning complex that uses architecture, form, and space to claim artisanship and handiwork as living and modern traditions.

By Fatima-azzahra Bendahmane, Ecoactiva, Casablanca, Morocco

LafargeHolcim Awards Bronze 2017 Middle East Africa

Adaptive reuse for refugee education, the El Marj, Lebanon: Located in an informal settlement for Syrian refugees, the project creates a dignified school environment using a repurposed pavilion.

By Joana Dabaj, CatalyticAction, El Mina Tripoli, Lebanon; Riccardo Conti, Matteo Zerbi, and team, CatalyticAction, London, United Kingdom

LafargeHolcim Awards Acknowledgement prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Miracle for Africa Foundation central library, Lilongwe, Malawi: Gently curving roof elements and screen enclosures for a library transcending sustainable construction into one integrated design.

By Steven Holl, Steven Holl Architects, New York, USA

LafargeHolcim Awards Acknowledgement prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Maisha Film Lab headquarters, Kampala, Uganda: A film training center in East Africa conceived as a cinematic series of spaces wrapped in brick to empower a new generation of filmmakers.

By TAMassociati, Trieste and Venice, Italy

LafargeHolcim Awards Acknowledgement prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Shea butter storage for Nyingali community, Karaga District, Ghana: The striking towers of the storage units are designed for passive cooling and allude to traditional local architecture.

By Wonjoon Han, Gahee Van, VHAN; and Sookhee Yuk, Make Africa Better, Seoul, South Korea

LafargeHolcim Awards Acknowledgement prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Odek Center for Nodding Disease, Odek, Uganda: Exuberant and playful transformation of traditional type forms for a healing center for children aimed at community-building after decades of conflict.

By Andrew Amara, Studio Flame, Kampala, Uganda

LafargeHolcim Awards Next Generation 1st prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Brick kiln and incremental development project, Soshanguve, South Africa: A proof that brick-making can be technically sustainable and deliver a social contribution to community-making.

By Heidi van Eeden, University of Pretoria, Cape Town, South Africa

LafargeHolcim Awards Next Generation 2nd prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Rubble recycling units, Aleppo, Syria: Rubble recycling units combining the rebuilding of the constructed habitat with the rebuilding of devastated communities.

By Nour Madi; Jad Melki, and Ghaith Abi Ghanem, Ghaith&Jad, Beirut, Lebanon

LafargeHolcim Awards Next Generation 3rd prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Designing processes for informal settlements, Cairo, Egypt: Design of an "(in)formal pattern language" to improve the conditions of poverty-stricken and fast-growing informal neighborhoods.

By Nada Nafeh, The American University in Cairo, Egypt

LafargeHolcim Awards Next Generation 4th prize 2017 Middle East Africa

Urban stair and library, Amman, Jordan: An urban stair and library transcending disciplinary boundaries by simultaneously being a building, an urban infrastructure, and patch of landscape.

By Noor Marji, German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan