

IJGlobal Awards 2021 – MENA Company Winners

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The Middle East and North Africa winners of the coveted company category for the IJGlobal Awards 2021 were announced last night at a gala dinner in The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Dubai.

IJGlobal prides itself on hosting annual awards that we believe to be the single more transparent and peer-review in the entire infrastructure and energy space and last night's event – hosted by IJ editor Ila Patel – brought together the great and good of the regional market for a night of celebration... and possibly a little bit of commiseration.

At IJ, we always identify the judging panel – [the MENA panel](#) can be seen here – with judges recused so as not to influence decisions where they have an interest / conflict. This recusal process is run by the IJ organisers, with an honour system in effect on Judgment Day.

The end result is an independent view of the market by industry experts – all of whom are active in the regional market – singling out winners through a secret voting system with each company judged against their submission for deals closed in the 2021 calendar year.

This year IJGlobal fielded more than 70 judges for virtual Judgment Day sessions led by the journalist with the deepest experience in the region. To read about the winners from Europe and the Americas, [click here...](#)

In this piece, we have singled out the winners for the MENA awards with (where we have them) comments from the judges.

MENA Company Winners

IJGlobal MLA of the Year

MUFG Bank

The judges agreed that MUFG has a well-established track record of structuring and advising project financings in the Middle East, singling it out for praise and recognising its achievements in the 2021 calendar year. One judge said of the



Japanese bank: “MUFG had an impressive impact upon the market during 2021 and particularly the innovation around the green loan certification for the Jubail 3B project.”

Over the course of the last year, MUFG played a prominent role in Saudi Aramco’s landmark divestment of 49% of its flagship crude oil pipeline network. It worked closely with both Saudi Aramco and EIG and was able to secure a number of roles across the piece from co-financial adviser to Underwriter. Acting on the lending side, MUFG was able to play a leading role in the negotiation and execution of the finance documents facilitating a seamless and timely path to financial close.

MUFG was active in the MENA power and water market with Yanbu 4, Jubail 3B, PP11 refinancing and Jazan ASU closing this year; demonstrating the importance of the sector and its clients to the bank. In addition, it acted as green loan coordinator for the 2 water projects showing the bank’s commitment to ESG and its own decarbonisation targets. As green loan coordinator, it managed the process of obtaining the second party opinion to allow the loan to be certified green, based on the Green Loan Principle framework.

IJGlobal Bond Arranger of the Year

Citi

The judging panel was set the challenge of deciding between 2 key players in the MENA bond market – Citi and Societe Generale – with the decision falling in Citi’s favour based on, as one judge put it: “The innovation shown in the development of the bond market in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia... which is very impressive.”

During 2021, Citi acted as joint global coordinator on the Galaxy Pipeline Assets Bidco Limited second bond issuance and lead placement agent on the Shuaibah Two Water Development Company’s senior secured note issuance. On both transactions Citi was appointed in a leading role, and the total value of bonds over both deals came in at around \$4.1 billion.

Of the Galaxy deal, Citi reckons that – together with the initial issuance – it is the largest combined issuance ever done by a single infrastructure issuer globally. It also stands out for the rare double A-rated, amortizing bonds on the back of critical O&G infrastructure with a robust contractual framework with ADNOC. The transaction upsized from \$2.5 billion on the back of strong market conditions and investor reception, familiarity with the structure from the initial transaction and investor outreach by the consortium.

On Shuaibah, this transaction was the first single-asset project bond from KSA and was also the inaugural issuance from the kingdom in the 4(a)(2) private placement market. This was additionally the inaugural issuance from ACWA Power in the 4(a)(2) private placement market – executed in this format due to strong investor appetite following the market sounding exercise and due to its non-index eligible size, therefore making the issuance not suitable for the 144a market.

IJGlobal Public Sector Winner

REPDO, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia’s Renewable Energy Project Development Office (REPDO) was a popular entrant for the public sector award in the MENA region with one judge lauding it for having done a “great job of pushing forward with a programme” and well as having achieved a “credible process” that was “very well delivered”. Another judge said: “Of the 3 candidates for the public sector award, I see REPDO as the only proper / real candidate. They have been pushing the renewables agenda in the kingdom, no doubt about that.”

The submission centred on REPDO’s efforts to drive the green energy agenda in the kingdom and – in 2021 – for having brought to financial close 2x 300MW solar parks on the same day. The Jeddah and Rabigh solar IPP projects made it to

financial close with separate consortia – forming part of REPDO2 Category B. The debt for 3 of the Category B projects signed in March.

Jeddah is being developed by a team of EDF, Masdar and Nesma Renewables with debt signed for the project in March and construction beginning on 11 April. A Marubeni-led consortium signed on 22 March a \$157 million debt package for its own 300MW concern – the Rabigh solar IPP. This deal is notable for being JBIC's first loan for a renewable energy project in Saudi Arabia and the DFI also said it was its first IPP investment.

IJGlobal Sponsor of the Year

ACWA Power

It is always gratifying when judges have almost complete consensus when debating the merits of submissions to the IJGlobal Awards... and this was very much the case with ACWA Power. The only downside of this consensus of opinion is that there tends to be little doubt at the end of what we like to be a secret process just who the winner is going to be! That aside, the dominant role played by ACWA Power in the MENA market made it a shoo-in as winner for the regional sponsor award, especially given that in the 2021 calendar year it had developed and financed 5 projects, aggregating 6.9GW of power capacity representing \$15 billion of total project costs and \$9.2 billion of long-term non-recourse project financing. Numbers like that make and a submission of the strength that ACWA Power presented made it a one-horse race for this impressive developer.

IJGlobal DFI of the Year

IFC

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) – the private sector arm of the World Bank – was singled out for honours by the MENA independent panel of judges for IJGlobal Awards 2021. One judge was particularly impressed by its involvement in Iraq, working alongside JICA, where they signed a \$125 million debt package to finance the Basra Multipurpose Terminal (BMT) at Umm Qasr Port. This judge said: "This was a challenging financing in a challenging jurisdiction that is likely to move the needle for the Iraqi economy. This transaction was clearly made possible through IFC's leadership."

Umm Qasr is Iraq's largest and only deep-water port. The BMT will involve a new container terminal including 2 berths to increase handling capacity. The debt package comprises \$46 million from the IFC; \$39 million from the IFC's Managed Co-Lending Portfolio Programme; and \$40 million from JICA. Both DFIs have supported the development of Iraq's largest port several times over the past decade. The IFC's support began in 2010 with a return in 2014 through debt and equity investments that indirectly fostered its expansion.

IJGlobal ECA of the Year

JBIC

The ECA's involvement in Al Warsan 2 Waste-to-Energy Plant in Dubai and the 300MW Rabigh Solar PV Plant IPP in Saudi Arabia won over the independent panel of judges to make Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) IJGlobal MENA ECA of the Year. One judge said: "A great contribution by JBIC to the financing of these 2 sectors – particularly the WtE sector – for the region which will become more important across the GCC with waste management taking more prominence in many countries. It is useful to have a financed solution as a benchmark."

Al Warsan 2 involves the supply, commission and operation of a BOT waste-to-energy project in Dubai. A Besix-led

consortium achieved financial close in July on what will be one of the largest WtE projects in the world, backed by a strong Japanese contingency on both the sponsor- and debt-side. The facility will intake 1.9 million tons per year (tpa) of waste and output 194MW of energy using stoker-type incinerators, thereby turning as much as 45% of Dubai's waste currently sent to landfills into usable energy. JBIC lent \$452 million to the project.

Rabigh reached financial close on 12 April. It is located in Makkah Province and was procured by REPDO, part of the second round of Saudi Arabia's National Renewable Energy Programme (NREP). A Marubeni-led consortium signed on 22 March a \$157 million debt package. It features a Japanese DFI, a commercial bank and a separate Islamic tranche.

IJGlobal Financial Adviser of the Year

SMBC

Adding to an already impressive performance across the other awards regions, SMBC was wearing out shoe leather again last night, making its way up to the podium to pick up another IJGlobal Award. One judge said of its performance in the MENA region: "I am impressed with the quality of the transactions SMBC was involved in – they are all important for the development of region. It achieved good leverage of the regional and international expertise for the benefit of the transactions."

SMBC was recognised for its diversified involvement across the region as well as engagement with a range of sectors that in 2021 included LNG, pipeline, power, renewable energy and a slew of other infrastructure projects. The Japanese bank contributed sustainable growth of the region by supporting landmark projects with leading financing role and significant commitment – the likes of Project Pearl and Dubai Waste to Energy.

It not only demonstrated Tier 1 lending roles, but also acted as financial adviser for such transactions – Dolphin Energy, Dubai Waste to Energy and Jeddah Solar – as well as FA for government and procurement side (series of renewable procurements in KSA) and contributing to the energy transition across MENA.

IJGlobal Legal Adviser of the Year

Covington

The Covington MENA team in 2021 closed 15 transactions in the Middle East with cumulative value of more than \$20 billion and it was this performance that won over judges with one saying: "This firm had an outstanding team having delivered on landmark projects."

Of the deals it closed, judges were particularly impressed by the role it played on the \$1.3 billion Warsan WtE project – the first of its kind in Dubai which will be one of the largest waste-to-energy facilities in the world, once completed. The Covington team – led by Dubai-based partner Richard Keenan – advised a 6-member consortium of equity investors (Besix, Hitachi Zosen Inova, Dubai Holding, DUBAL Holding, Itochu Corporation and the Tech Group) on the development and financing of the project, which closed in June. Dubai Municipality signed a 35-year concession agreement with the project company, Dubai Waste Management Company (DWMC) under which the Dubai municipality is the sole supplier of waste.

Covington also worked on Umm Al Hayman Wastewater Treatment Plant that closed in October with ACWA Power, Saudi Aramco, Air Products, and Air Products Qudra. The project financing is for a \$12 billion air separation unit, gasification, and power joint venture in Jazan Economic City, Saudi Arabia. Covington advised the joint venture on the transaction. The IGCC plant is the world's largest facility of its kind and the joint venture serves Saudi Aramco's Jazan Refinery, which processes 400,000 barrels per day of crude oil to produce ultra-light sulfur diesel, gasoline and other products.

IJGlobal Model Auditor of the Year

BDO

Model audit is an essential element of the delivery of infrastructure and energy project financing and often the unsung hero of many a transaction... but not so with IJGlobal Awards. And this year, the independent panel of judges recognised the role played by BDO with one judge saying: "BDO demonstrated great innovation in financial modelling, particularly for the KSA schools projects."

BDO has developed a strong record of undertaking model audits supporting the financing of a broad range of infrastructure projects including petrochemicals, power, energy, renewables, and social infrastructure across the MENA region. Its extensive experience of PPPs in Europe has helped in respect of assurance on new social infrastructure and renewables projects as they are developed in the MENA region.

The most high profile projects in the MENA region that BDO supported in the 2021 calendar year include the lines of Sadara Restructuring to allow Sadara Chemical Company more time to meet its existing senior debt service obligations, in the form of a grace period for principal repayments, maturity extension and the reprofiling of the existing debt, supported by additional guarantees from Saudi Arabian Oil Company and The Dow Chemical Company.

It also worked on Saudi Arabia Schools Bundle I which attracted the attention of one of the judges. This project is the first bundle of the school PPP programme in the kingdom, relating to 60 kindergartens, elementary, intermediate and secondary schools in Jeddah and Mecca.

It was also involved in Jazan Economic City CCGT power generation and gasification, KSA. This project will supply power, hydrogen, steam and utilities to Saudi Arabian Oil Company under a 25-year PSA. The integrated gasification, combined cycle power plant, air separation unit and associated utilities is reputed to be the world's largest such plant and will comprise 5 combined-cycle units of 770MW capacity each.

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