

IJGlobal Awards 2023 – MENA Judges

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Today we take great pride in announcing the judging panel for IJGlobal Awards 2023, unveiling a team of experienced industry professionals who will deliberate company awards for the Middle East and North Africa region.

These awards are to recognise landmark developments and the organisations that contributed to the delivery of greenfield projects in the infrastructure and energy space, as well as refinance activity.

IJGlobal Awards are not to be confused with IJInvestor Awards ([Americas](#) and [Rest of World](#)) which celebrate developments within the infrastructure fund community and infra/energy M&A. They also stand separate to the [IJGlobal ESG Awards](#).

We believe that the IJGlobal Awards are the single most transparent and peer review in this sector, and we pride ourselves on fielding regional teams of experts who assess submissions and vote (in secret) on the organisations that win them over.

The MENA judges will meet for Judgment Day in early January over Teams to debate the merits of companies that closed deals – project finance greenfield and refi – in that region over the course of the 2023 calendar year.

Judges are recused from casting a vote where they are conflicted. In effect, this means that lawyers cannot vote in the legal segment and bankers are not allowed to sway the decision in the MLA category.

The judges (in alphabetical order) for Europe and Africa Judgment Day are:

- Christopher Cantelmi – IFC
- Abu Chowdhury – ASMA Capital Partners
- Adel Elsolh – Natixis
- Nawara Msallati – Besix
- Sami Neffati – Aberdeen Standard Investments
- Vishal Rander – Deloitte
- Ravi Suri – KPMG
- Dan Taylor – National Development Fund of Saudi Arabia
- Laughlan Waterston – SMBC
- Catherine Workman – Pinsent Masons

Christopher Cantelmi

A principal investment officer for the IFC infrastructure and natural resources department working out of Dubai, Christopher is responsible for origination and execution of debt and equity investments in the power, water, energy and essential infra sectors throughout the MENA region.



He is a regular member of the IJGlobal awards panel for this region, bringing a depth of knowledge that bolsters the findings and he once had to leave a panel early in a bullet proof vest.

Chris led IFC's efforts to support renewable energy programmes in Jordan and Egypt, while creating and structuring complementary low transaction cost, standardised limited recourse project financing programmes to support the many renewable developers participating.

Before joining the IFC in 2013, Chris served at the Mubadala / GE Capital (MGEC) JV for 3 years in Abu Dhabi as a director and head of energy and project finance.

Abu Chowdhury

Another repeat judge from previous awards panels, Abu's understanding of the regional market makes him a valued regional expert with a firm grasp on greenfield developments.

Serving as the managing director and CFO of ASMA Capital Partners, Abu is also a member of the management committee and – alongside his role within the investment decision making process – is responsible for the finance function at ASMA Capital.

He is also a member of the board of directors of a number of investee companies of the fund.

Prior to this, Abu was a managing partner at EMP Bahrain and was responsible for managing IDBIF I, which returned more than \$1.2 billion to its investors.

Before EMP Bahrain, Abu was with Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank where he was responsible for managing and structuring infrastructure and asset-backed investments.

Adel Elsolh

Dubai-based managing director and co-head investment banking, coverage, and infrastructure energy finance at Natixis, Adel is responsible for the French bank's activities in the Middle East, Turkey and Africa.

With more than 20 years' experience in banking – including 9 with the RBS infra finance group in London covering advisory, lending and equity – he has deep experience across the infrastructure and energy sectors.

He has exposure to power, renewables, O&G, telecoms, water, waste, and social infrastructure as well as accommodation in META, delivering fixed rate solutions from institutional investors.

He has been based in the Middle East, covering the region since the summer of 2010 – and again he is a regular judge on the MENA panel, bringing to bear his considerable experience.





Nawara Msallati

Head of project finance and Middle East concessions and assets at BESIX in Dubai, Nawara has been in this role since autumn 2020, though it is the second time she has worked for the organisation.

At BESIX, she serves as lead, managing the full finance workstreams of the live project finance deals (from raising capital to financial close); while supervising the financial activities of the existing subsidiaries.

Nawara joined BESIX Group from Citigroup where she led deals in the power, petrochemicals and utilities sectors out of Dubai from the summer of 2017 to autumn 2020.

Prior to that was her first stint at BESIX (2013-17) where she gained crucial experience to set her up for full control of the assets on the group – the role she currently holds – with the added benefit of experienced gained at Citi.

She started her career at Bank Audi before moving to Dubai for the first spell at Citi.

Last year, she joined the MENA judging panel for the first time, making such a strong contribution that it guaranteed a repeat invite.

Sami Neffati

Managing partner of the Aberdeen Standard Investments Investcorp joint venture focusing on infrastructure in the GCC and MENA region, Sami has deep exposure to the infra / energy lending landscape and operates out of Bahrain.

He previously held the position of assistant general manager for energy at SMBC in London and even worked for a stretch at the famed WestLB team.

Sami is an emerging markets specialist with long experience in the MENAT region.

He headed Sumitomo's business development for Africa and led teams working on financing projects in renewable energy, power generation, transmission and distribution.

He also worked as an adviser on projects in the MENAT region and to Japanese conglomerates on African markets penetration strategy.



Vishal Rander

Vishal leads Deloitte's project and infrastructure finance team in the Middle East and has been based in the GCC since 2011.

He has more than 18 years of professional expertise, focusing on PPP and project finance advisory services for both public and private sector clients.

IJGlobal reported on Vishal being made up to [partner at Deloitte](#) back in June 2022.

Vishal has successfully managed transactions across various sectors, including power, water, wastewater, solid waste, transport and accommodation.

Notably, he spearheaded the award-winning financial advisory team for last year's wastewater deal of the year – [Madinah, Buraydah, and Tabuk ISTP](#).



Additionally, he led last year's social infrastructure deal of the year – [Zayed City Schools PPP](#).



Ravi Suri

Long-established infrastructure specialist Ravi Suri recently returned to KPMG where he resumes the role of senior adviser on global infrastructure sustainable finance, attached to the Portugal branch.

Ravi has in recent years established himself as a key player in the Middle East, working first with AP Moller Capital and then Alpen Capital in private equity roles, operating out of Dubai. His new role back at KPMG sees him retain a Gulf focus, but on a more international level.

Ravi has deep experience across the infrastructure finance community having started his career at GE Capital in Europe before moving on to work with ABN Amro in Asia Pacific, then at Standard Chartered Bank in Dubai where he stayed for 15 years, starting the PF unit in 2002 and going on to serve as global head of project and export finance.

He left Standard Chartered in 2017 to join KPMG where he stayed for a little more than 4 years in Dubai serving as partner, rising to be senior adviser and global head of infra finance.

This was followed by spells as senior managing director at AP Moller Capital and then managing director at Alpen Capital – before his return to KPMG.

Dan Taylor

Currently an adviser to the National Development Fund of Saudi Arabia on a strategic infrastructure financing initiative, Dan is a well-known figure within the regional infrastructure community.

He started his career in leveraged and acquisition finance in Australia in 2000, continuing with UBS and Goldman Sachs in M&A advisory with a focus on the industrials, building materials and services sectors.

In 2008, he moved to the Gulf where he was head of investment for a UAE sovereign direct investment entity and then CIO for a large, diversified family group.

Dan recently served as head of structured finance at Al Rajhi Bank in KSA, leading the greenfield financing of a series of water, renewables and industrial projects.



Laughlan Waterston

Although he has now returned to London, Laughlan has been active across MENA for most of the judging period and is firmly plugged into activity across the region.

Laughlan in the summer of 2020 switched roles with Tom Waterhouse and took over the position as head of corporate and project finance at SMBC's Middle East department based in Dubai, returning to London last month.

Laughlan has more than 25 years' experience in banking with the vast majority of those focused on project and structured finance.

He has experience on a wide variety of projects and corporates in the energy and infrastructure sectors including power, renewable energy, O&G, petrochemicals, waste to energy, wastewater, utilities, social infrastructure and transportation.



Laughlan's roles and product areas include financial advisory, structured finance, corporate finance, acquisition finance, green/sustainable finance, debt capital markets, derivatives products and LP investment.

Catherine Workman



A partner and head of the Middle East region for Pinsent Masons, Catherine is also the board sponsor for the law firm's business in Saudi Arabia, while also serving as a board member of the British Aviation Group.

She is a projects lawyer specialising in PPP across a range of sectors with a particular focus on airports, ports and waste management.

Catherine has worked on projects across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Catherine has been delivering PPP projects for more than 25 years – including the first hospital PPP to achieve financial close in 1997 – and relocated to Dubai in 2019.

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