

IJGlobal Awards 2023 – Latin America Company Winners

Ila Patel

15/03/2024

The infrastructure community came together last night in the glorious Guastavino's to celebrate the successes of 2023 at the IJGlobal Awards.

Many of the guests had come direct from the IJLatAm conference in Miami which had been the resounding success it always is.

They came to Guastavino's to hear who had been shortlisted and won for achievements in the Latin American greenfield and refinance arena for infrastructure and energy deals closed in the last calendar year.



These awards are debated – based on submissions from across the industry – by an independent panel of industry experts, making the IJGlobal Awards what we believe to be the single most transparent and peer reviewed in this sector.

The Latin American transaction awards – the winners' story [can be accessed here](#) – are chosen (again based on submissions) by the IJGlobal editorial team. You can read about the North America company winners and deal winners on these pages.

The winners announced last night are:

- Bond Arranger of the Year – BNDES
- Financial Adviser of the Year – Itau BBA
- Legal Adviser of the Year, Local – Mattos Filho
- Legal Adviser of the Year, International – Allen & Overy
- MLA of the Year – SocGen
- Ratings Agency of the Year – Moody's
- Tax Adviser of the Year - Pinheiro Neto Advogados
- Technical Adviser of the Year – Arup

Bond Arranger of the Year

BNDES

Numerous challenges faced the Brazilian infrastructure community in 2023 with long term financing deadlines

approaching and an urgent need to refinance bridge loans. This was further exacerbated by setbacks experienced by major companies like Lojas Americanas and Light in H1 2023, leading to a cautious Brazilian fixed income market with significantly widened spreads.

One judge said: “BNDES encouraged private investors to participate in the purchase of infrastructure bonds, thereby amplifying the impact of BNDES's financing.”

Another commented: “BNDES has made significant strides in becoming a much more client-friendly bank, with a willingness to address some of its previous structural issues which sometimes hampered the bank's efforts to deploy capital due to bureaucracy and inflexibility. This endeavour has required enormous cultural efforts and top management focus on evolving the bank's mindset.

“In doing so it has become an enormous mobilising agent in Brazil, deploying capital to develop critical infrastructure across all relevant areas of the country's economy. In terms of bond arranging, the 3 examples showcase BNDES' more commercial approach to financial solutions for the multiple economic sectors. Its sole responsibility for coordinating 1/3 of the overall issuances in the country is an important feat, and one that allowed the country's economic prowess to continue without impact from the headwinds that may have played a larger role should they not have stepped in.”

To enable the financing of essential projects in various areas, BNDES implemented some key strategies:

- use of non-recourse project finance operations to mitigate investor concerns about the deterioration of corporate issuer risks
- long-term bonds to manage volatility of the long-term interest rate curve, while maintaining the projects' payment capacity
- sustainable certification to attract a larger number of investors, aligning with growing demands for sustainability
- combination of differentiated financing structures

These strategies won it Bond Arranger of the Year and supported significant projects, such as sanitation in Rio de Janeiro (the country's second-largest city), the expansion of a new airport network in the south and central region of Brazil, and improvements in the railway network.

As one judge concluded: “BNDES also did a remarkable job in advancing the ESG agenda in Brazil.”

Financial Adviser of the Year

Itau BBA

In 2023, Itaú structured more than 150 closed transactions within the calendar year, such as financial advisories, debentures issuances, issuance of bank guarantees and offshore loans.

Itaú participated in more than BRL 30.6 billion of investments through credit raised, structured, underwritten or guaranteed in the year. Out of this amount, around half were related to projects in the renewable and energy efficiency segment, 34% in the water and wastewater sector, demonstrating its commitment in stepping up its financing and services in these positive impact sectors.

It was selected as Financial Adviser of the Year as one judge said: “Itaú demonstrated being a major player in structuring and financing projects in several sectors in Brazil, participating in a wide variety of different innovative and complex structures.

Another judge said: “The firm is successfully leading transactions in Brazil and other Latin American countries such as Colombia. The size and complexity of the Aguas do Rio project financing demonstrates the strength of the firm.”

Continuing praise, one judge said: “The projects in which the adviser participated also showed great innovation and

standards for the infrastructure market. Its work has been very important both in solidifying pioneering and innovative structures, such as green energy generation complexes and also intermediating projects between Brazilian public banks and resources from the international market. This shows great performance as well as sets great market precedent for such industries.”

Legal Adviser of the Year, Local

Mattos Filho

Local Legal Adviser of Year goes to Mattos Filho which has been involved in all key transactions that took place in Brazil in 2023.

The firm put together the landmark financing of the Line 6 Sao Paulo subway and more recently the AEGEA multi-source financing. Both deals had many “first of its kind” features. It also assisted TAG in one of the largest cross-border refinancings.

BNDES has also selected Mattos Filho to advise the bank on structuring the Angra 3 nuclear power plant financing.

One judge said of the firm: “It has a great track record in Brazil,” while another said: “One of the best firms in Brazil without a doubt.”

Another said: “The operations in which the legal adviser participated not only reflect a highly significant amount, but also represent several technological and innovative advances for the Brazilian infrastructure market, so that they made possible relevant financing from public banks, as well as financing concessions for sectors such as sanitation, that generate life improvement for the cities involved.”

Legal Adviser of the Year, International

Allen & Overy

Though Allen & Overy’s Latin America team is primarily located in the United States and Brazil, it has one of the most extensive networks of the region. This ability is a “significant advantage over our competitors, given most of our work is cross-border and cross-practice in nature,” according to its submission.

Transactions it has worked on span major sectors, including energy transition (green hydrogen, ammonia, SAF, EVs), power (renewables and conventional), transport (roads, rail, ports, airports, parking), oil, gas and petrochemicals, metals and mining, and water.

One judge said: “A&O displays innovation, clear success and has had a significant impact in Brazil and Costa Rica,” making it Legal Adviser of the Year, International.

Another judge said: “It has a great track record in different countries,” with another commenting: “The cases presented show an outstanding performance in various infrastructure sectors such as digital infrastructure, mining infrastructure and cross border projects, such as the groundbreaking one with US dollar financing of renewable energy projects in Brazil. All proved to be of great and solid importance in the field of project financing and innovation.”

With energy transition blossoming in the region, its importance has led to the expansion from solely traditional renewables to new areas like green hydrogen and public transport EVs. To finance both traditional and new energy transition projects, A&O has worked with sponsors, developers, DFIs and commercial banks to develop new financing structures allowing for these innovative technologies while protecting against political risk.

Even sectors that traditionally fall outside the green economy, such as mining and digital infrastructure, are looking to

different structures, like sustainability-linked financings and bonds, to benefit from incentives and tap new funding sources.

MLA of the Year

SocGen

Societe Generale worked with clients in Latin America through time sensitive acquisition financings, including a regional data centre portfolio, solar PV assets in Chile, and diversified renewable assets in Panama and Costa Rica.

The bank also supported clients in milestone financings including 2 critical desalination projects in Chile, the Ruta al Sur motorway in Colombia, a silver mine and gas pipeline networks in Mexico and Brazil. The year marked a significant increase in the number of lead financing roles and underwritings for SocGen in the region, that align with its ESG commitments and goals.

One judge commented on the MLA of The Year submission: The enabled project examples are compelling, in particular in its breadth of opportunities - and including the iconic desalination plant, a first of its kind structure in Chile.”

Another judge said: “SocGen’s submission gave measurable results and demonstrable success achieved through an innovative approach, alongside evidence of a clear impact within certain, specific elements of the market in all 3 examples.”

Judges overall were impressed by SocGen’s “impressive and complex transactions.”

Ratings Agency of the Year

Moody’s

Moody’s was recognised by the independent panel of judges for its achievements as a global provider of credit ratings, research, and risk analysis.

As of 1 December 2023, Moody’s has rated over US\$ 2.5 trillion of project and infrastructure finance (PIF) debt covering more than 1,000 publicly rated companies and transactions.

As one judge said: “Moody’s showed relevant participation in the market and collaboration in rating innovative transactions. It also has some comprehensive research reports showing interesting and knowledgeable views of different sectors and markets.”

The Moody’s submission states: “Our 2022 cyber heat map points to rising risks for many sectors, while mitigation and other defensive measures are also becoming more prevalent. We rank ordered the cyber risk exposure of 71 global sectors based on a scale of low, moderate, high or very high risk.

“Utilities, which include regulated and self-regulated electric utilities with generation, electric and gas transmission and distribution utilities, unregulated electric utilities and power companies and water and wastewater utilities, are scored as having very high cyber risk exposure.

“Our ESG scores provide greater transparency about how we incorporate ESG considerations into credit ratings. Credit impact score (CIS) is an output of the rating process that indicates the extent, if any, to which ESG factors impact the rating of an issuer or transaction.

Tax Adviser of the Year

Pinheiro Neto Advogados

Pinheiro Neto has an integrated infrastructure team with strong practices in tax, banking, financing and capital markets transactions, combined with deep technical knowledge and wide experience in public law and regulatory industries, which allows the firm to understand the underlying risks of the project

The firm has an extensive track-record working for all parties (banks, concessionaires, borrowers and their controlling shareholders, project sponsors). It also advises clients in local and international funding transactions, that involve financing through public banks – BNDES, Caixa Economica Federal, BNB, as well the capital markets in local offerings of project debentures and international bond offerings.

It also advises clients in funding alternatives provided by international multilateral agencies, such as the IFC, IDB and the World Bank.

It won Tax Adviser of the Year because as one judge put it, “Pinheiro Neto has a solid legal outfit in Brazil. It also showcased innovative and landmark transactions in its submission.”

Another judge said: “The entry is detailed and focuses on interesting aspects to make it possible to analyze Pinheiro Neto's role as a Tax Adviser in Latin America.”

Technical Adviser of the Year

Arup

Arup’s advisory services span strategy, finance, programme management, asset operations, and organisational aspects, featuring experts beyond engineers, including project finance specialists and economists.

In Latin America, it is currently involved in over 25 infrastructure projects as technical advisers. In 2023, Arup has advised on projects in a variety of sectors, including telecoms, renewables, transport, energy, social infrastructure, power, environment, and commodities.

Arup has worked in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Honduras, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. It has a long history of working on innovative financing structures around the world, including Colombia, where it is acting as adviser to both international and national lenders on the 4G & 5G highways.

As one judge said: “Arup gave the best examples of ample participation in the region, with lots of interesting and innovative projects and approach to environmental and social matters.”

Another judge said: “The sample of technical advisers with specific knowledge in LatAm is very limited and Arup concentrates a big chunk of credentials, giving them an advantage over less experienced firms or new entrants to the market, which typically lack the specific technical or regulatory expertise.”

One judge said: “Arup is a reliable technical partner. We worked with them to study the possibilities of the circular economies across 3 strategic sectors. They are innovative and practical.”

Thank you for printing this article from IJGlobal.

As the leading online publication serving the infrastructure investment market, IJGlobal is read daily by decision-makers within investment banks, international law firms, advisory firms, institutional investors and governments.

If you have been given this article by a subscriber, you can contact us through www.ijglobal.com/sign-in, or call our London office on +44 (0)20 7779 8870 to discuss our subscription options.