White Canvas
Health center and school in refugee camp, Bassikounou, Mauretania

Main author
Attila Szabadics, ArchSus Group, Pécs, Hungary

Summary by the jury
The project takes on the difficult task to provide public amenities in refugee camps. The submitted proposal for a health center and school was specifically developed for the Mbera refugee camp in southeast Mauritania of more than 70,000 people, near the border with Mali. Foldable and easily-erectable tent structures form the basic units for the school and health center facilities. Phase Change Material (PCM) accumulators are used for air-conditioning, taking advantage of the temperature differential between day and night for creating livable and safe conditions without additional energy requirements – the colder air at night cools the hot air during the day. The use of this simple but effective technology in semi-desert or desert areas helps to improve living conditions in the camps, upholding the human dignity of the refugees and enhancing their chances for stability and self-reliance.

Appraisal by the jury
The jury praised the basic premise of the design proposal that combines the intelligent deployment of technology with social objectives. Two technical aspects were specifically praised. First, the sophisticated light-weight system for the tent structures was considered a highly appropriate solution for satisfying the specific needs of instant construction. Second, the use of PCM accumulators as an environmental control system to cool or heat the air was deemed a brilliant answer for improving comfort levels. Here technology is put to work for enhancing the living conditions of uprooted political refugees.

Project data
Context: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: ArchSus Group
Background: Research project
Planned start: August 2018

Further author
Mónica Rácz, planner, ArchSus Group, Pécs, Hungary