

international construction

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A seriously hot market

Conditions for construction can be challenging, but overcoming challenges has become common practice in the Middle East, as **Mike Hayes** reports.

According to business analyst MEED, the outlook for construction markets in the Middle East is generally improving.

The UAE is the highest-ranking market in terms of construction spend, with Dubai being the most high-profile emirate, continuing the significant development of its infrastructure ahead of its hosting of the World Expo in 2020.

The contract to develop the infrastructure required for the Expo 2020 site in Dubai was recently awarded to a joint venture (JV) between Orascom and Besix.

Cairo-based Orascom is working with Belgian firm Besix on the construction of amenities such as sewerage infrastructure, roads, underground pipes and cabling, and electrical and water services.

The contract is one of up to 47 expected to be granted this year, by the team responsible for delivering the Expo 2020 site, with an estimated total value of around \$3 billion.

Recently, more than 4.7 million m³ of earth had been moved on the event site in Dubai South, with Tristar Engineering and Construction having already undertaken the deep infrastructure work on the non-gated area, known as Expo Village.

The completed Expo 2020 site will cover a total area of almost 4.4 km², and is expected to host up to 300,000 visitors per day, between October 2020 and April 2021.

Another Expo-related contract, which was recently awarded to HLG Contracting, is the Expo Village towers.

The AED619 million (\$170 million) contract, awarded by

HLG Contracting will construct Expo Village, five 16-storey residential towers in Dubai



Trevi subsidiary Swissboring undertakes foundation work at Dubai's ICD Brookfield Place tower

Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC), is for the construction of five 16-storey residential towers.

The Middle East-based HLG – in which Australia-based CIMIC Group has a 45% stake – will be responsible for constructing the towers' concrete frames, masonry, facades, fit-out and external works.

Three of the Expo Village structures will be joined by a three-storey podium, with another similar podium connecting the remaining two.

HLG will also be involved with mechanical and electrical systems within the project.

Work on the towers is just getting underway, with completion due by June 2019, in time to host visitors and participants for the 2020 event.

Ongoing projects

Beyond the Expo excitement, there are still plenty of ongoing projects in Dubai, including the construction of the ICD Brookfield Place in the emirate's Financial Centre.

Swissboring, a UAE-based branch of Italian contractor Trevi, is performing the foundation works for the project, as part of a JV with Investment Corporation of Dubai (ICD) and Brookfield Property Partners.

Swissboring will be the subcontractor for the enabling work of the 54-storey, 282 m-high tower, which will contain more than 274,000 m² of office space and connect to a 45,000 m², five-



Orascom and Besix move ahead with groundworks on the site of the Dubai 2020 World Expo

to transform the state into one that can be sustained when oil revenues dwindle.

With this in mind, the new smart city of Lusail – soon to be home to some 250,000 residents – is being fitted with a district cooling system, featuring 175 km of piping – making it one of the world's largest central cooling systems. This will save an estimated 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually, limiting the contribution to global warming.

A 24 km waste pipe is also being laid underneath the city, as an advanced and efficient way of carrying human waste to recycling and treatment plants outside of the city.

To encourage residents to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, a light railway, water-taxi system and underground pedestrian tunnels are also being constructed, promoting alternative means of travel.

Volvo machines

A large number of Volvo CE machines are currently involved in the development of Lusail City, where there are 45,000 workers on site each day. Each must be equipped with air conditioning, as temperatures can regularly reach 50°C.

Mega events in the Middle East, such as Expo and the World Cup of football, do not only benefit the host nations; some neighbouring states are developing hospitality and transport network offerings in the hope of catching the tourism wave that will sweep through this part of the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia, for one, has recently unveiled its plans to create a tourism hotspot almost twice the size of Wales, along its Red Sea coastline.

Whether or not the Saudi government has any wish to attract football fans, or would rather focus on its own sizeable religious pilgrimage groups, remains to be seen. Regardless of that, construction firms from around the globe will hope to play a role in developing the 34,000 km² region between the cities of Umluf and Alwajh, which includes 50 islands.

While there will be many hurdles to overcome before this mega project dream is realised, projects to upgrade and develop the country's transport infrastructure are already moving ahead. For example, the Ministry of Transport is currently funding an initiative that combines 20 road projects and spans seven regions.

Shibh Al-Jazira (SAJCO) is the >

storey retail centre. There will also be an 5,500 m² public area, flanked by restaurants and featuring arts and cultural events.

The scope of Swissboring's contract within the 14-month project is to construct 12,000m² of diaphragm wall, and bore 850 piles with diameters between 1,500 mm and 1,000 mm, as well as more than 2,000 ground anchors.

Meanwhile, Qatar is similarly gearing up to be the venue of the Fifa World Cup of football in 2022.

JV partners Qatari construction firm AlJaber Engineering and Turkish firm Tekfen Construction recently won the contract to build the Al Thumana World Cup stadium in Doha.

The 40,000-seater venue, set to host matches up to and including the quarter-final stage of the tournament, is the seventh stadium for which a main construction contract has been awarded.

Another Qatari firm, Arab Engineering Bureau, was also confirmed by SC as the design & construction supervision consultant for the project.

Of course, Qatar's plans for future growth go well beyond 2022; the government's Vision 2030 initiative aims

Tekfen Construction recently won the contract to build the Al Thumana World Cup stadium in Doha

