

## Téchne, WHO/AFRO and Politecnico de Torino win the International Innovative Health Design Award

The [Technical Science for Health Network \(Téchne\)](#), is a WHO network of architects, engineers, designers and public health practitioners from several institutions globally, that aims to make health settings and structures safer and reduce the risk of hospital-acquired infections. Established in early 2020 as part of the response to COVID-19, Téchne has since continued to grow, becoming a key logistical response network helping with preparedness and response to health emergencies.

In July 2023, the [WHO Technical Science for Health Network \(Téchne\)](#), together with the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) and [Politecnico di Torino](#) – a Téchne member – were awarded the first prize of the [International Union of Architects \(UIA\)](#)'s 2023 International Innovative Health Design Awards.

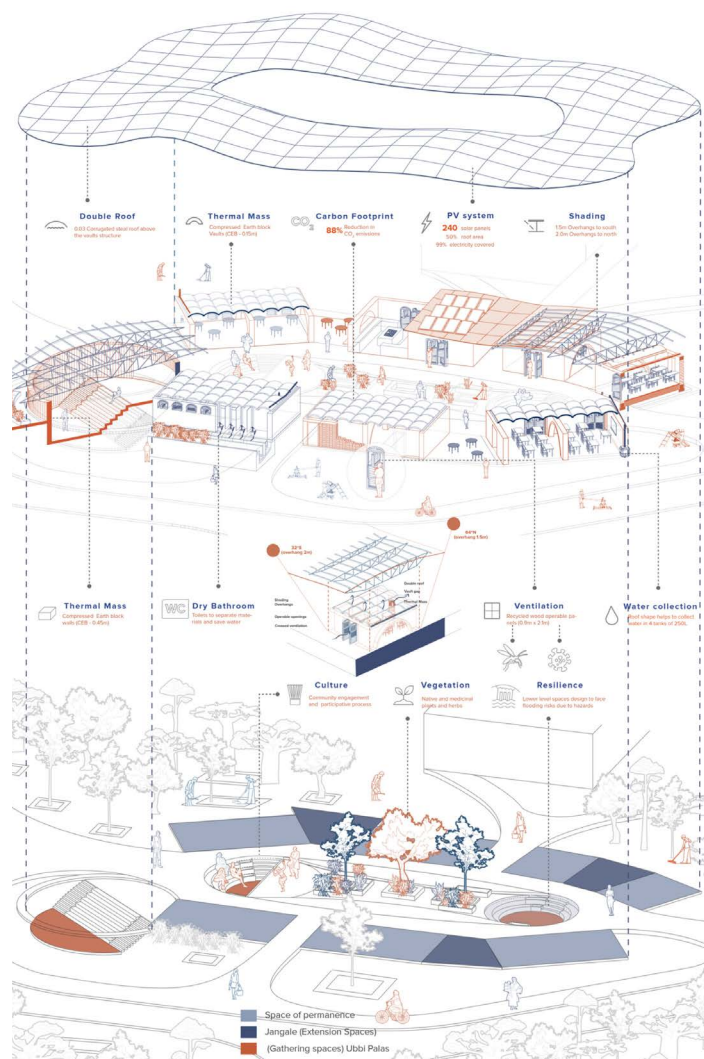
Founded in 1948, the [International Union of Architects \(UIA\)](#) is recognized as the only global architecture organization by most United Nations agencies and aims to make architecture a central tool in achieving the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The International Innovative Health Design Awards seek to recognize innovative architectural design solutions addressing issues brought to the fore by the COVID19 pandemic. The awards ceremony was held in Copenhagen during the UIA's World Congress of Architects with this year's theme focused on: 'Sustainable Future. Leave no one behind'.

Téchne, Politecnico di Torino and AFRO jointly developed and submitted their research proposal titled 'Design for Healthcare SURGE' to the IUA, which won the first prize. **This research proposal creates a methodology to support the design process of the Centers of Excellence as conceived by WHO under AFRO's [Strengthening and Utilizing Response Groups for Emergencies \(SURGE\) flagship project.](#)**

This harmonized methodological approach for the design of Centers of Excellence can be easily replicated and adapted in various settings. **Its innovative aspect lies in the fact that it combines an understanding of context and has four pillars working in synergy: environmental sustainability, cultural adequacy, building technologies, and infection risk mitigation, to achieve an effective result.** By combining these pillars, the Centers of Excellence's design satisfactorily fulfills the functional requirements to address future emergencies, reducing the buildings' carbon footprint and the risk of infectious diseases and involving local values and expertise through community engagement.

Moving forward, the methodology will guide the construction of both the Nairobi and Senegal Centers of Excellence. To operationalize this over the coming months, AFRO will set up a project management committee, raise funds for the project to allow the governments of Kenya and Senegal to recruit construction contractors to build the hubs.

Once constructed, the Centers of Excellence will on-board and train multidisciplinary teams to be ready to be deployed during health emergencies. It will also be the locus of a variety of subregional activities including supply chain and logistics, workforce development, research and development, genomic surveillance and data analysis.



Design proposal for Centers of Excellence, which won the International Union of Architects (UIA)'s 2023 International Innovative Health Design Awards. Credit: Politecnico di Torino

The research proposal was developed in 2022 by a team of architects and engineers, professors and Master's Degree students involved in the Green Building Design Studio from the Politecnico di Torino (Departments of Architecture and Design and Energy), in collaboration with AFRO and WHO Headquarters' Téchne Operational Support Team.