## Editorial

This issue contains nine articles that cover a wide range of topics that are pertinent to developing countries, from housing, project management to architecture. The paper contributors domicile in Tanzania, Malaysia, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and Algeria.

Shortage of affordable homes is now a global phenomenon. In developing countries, owner-built incremental housing offers a way to help resolve this issue. The first paper by Mselle and Sanga examines the challenges facing incremental housing developers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the cost-push factors and the level of severity of each challenge and cost-push factor on the average annual expenditure for this housing category. Data was collected using a questionnaire survey. They found the challenges include low income, poor technical capacity, high cost for materials, owner's stress, dishonest among technicians and material theft after delivery. Cost-push factors vary in terms of their effect on cost-house type relationship. Policy-wise, the authors recommend relaxation of the legal requirements to obtain building permits, title to land and other surveying costs, as well as tightening building regulations.

Contractors from developing countries are increasingly integrating with the global economy. The second paper by Ab. Rani et al. looked into Malaysian contractors' awareness on competitiveness arising from the liberalisation and globalisation of the construction industry. From the questionnaire survey, they discovered that most of the contractors have a moderate level of awareness. These contractors recognise their competitors' strengths and weaknesses when bidding for new projects, and at the same time strive to improve their competitiveness vis-a-vis local contractors locally. The authors suggest that the findings be used as a baseline for the Malaysian contractors to engage in various educational programmes to enhance their competitiveness.

Masonry thin shells provides an efficient and versatile solution to housing problems afflicting many developing countries. Cracking is common due to issues surrounding the durabiliity of earthen building materials. The third paper produced by Bradley, Gohnert and Bulovic reviewed the various techiques used for the construction of earthen shells and found that fixity generated during construction with formwork is the cause of cracking. They end the paper by recommending solution to prevent or mitigate this problem.

Baharun et al. came up with the fourth paper that proposes a system using hydronic night cooled radiant cooling panel to keep cool the interior of buildings in countries along the humid tropical belt such as Malaysia. The system is a hybrid of passive and active systems which is environmentally sustainable. They claim that large monetary savings can be gain from this system, and hence the benefit of quicker payback period.

Non-compliance of public procurement guidelines is a common malaise of developing countries. Zadawa, Hussin and Osmadi tested the mediation effect of enforcement as a compliance mechanism on influencing projects' award. Data were collected from selected Nigerian federal universities using survey

questionnaires. They found that enforcement has a bearing on cost performance of construction projects and call for prompt implementation of enforcement actions by way of penalties and action against defaulting stakeholders and construction project parties.

Macro-economic analysis of the construction sector has long been favoured by some construction scholars. Following this tradition, Abubakar, Abdullahi and Bala analysed the causality links between the growth of the construction industry and the growth of the Nigerian economy. Using econometric techniques, they detected a bi-directional linkage between the construction sector and the gross domestic product of Nigeria. Hence, they advice that any effort to diversify the country's economy should consider revamping the construction industry first.

Standard forms of contracts by their very nature cannot cater for all eventualities that might manifest in construction projects. Often, consultants on behalf of their clients alter or modify the standard forms to suit the project context. Mewomo, Aigbavboa and Lesalane in the seventh paper found "altering risk allocation", "inserting additional obligation" and "correcting something which is not applicable" are the three prominent factors that drive the amendment of standard forms of contract in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The authors however echo the concerns of past scholars of unintended effects of alterations. Amendments should be done as a last resort and with careful attention to their damaging effects on other interrelated clauses. Also it important that equitable and balanced risk allocation is maintained.

The second last paper written by Kwofie, Botchway and Amos-Abanyie is about a study they conducted to assess the performance level of the critical project management competencies of architects. From survey questionnaires in Ghana, they found the architects display below expected performance on seven critical competencies which include "efficient communication with all project participants and stakeholders". This finding, according to the authors, justifies project management training programmes for Ghanaian architects to be rolled out.

The paper by Mohamed and Karima from Algeria is the last paper to grace this issue. They revisited Philippe Dehan's reflection which underscore the difference between architectural quality and quality of industrial products. The authors' concern centred on the architectural quality of social housing as an architectural object rather than an industrial product. They proposed a new focus on the architectural quality of housing through the integration of the users' viewpoints (viewing angles) in the design process. The case study was Diar Es Saada in the municipality of El Madania in the city of Algiers. This viewing angles' approach allows the user to visualise the architectural space as conceived by the architect, which amounts to ensuring the real architectural quality of the different spaces.

Abdul Rashid Abdul Aziz, Universiti Sains Malaysia
Alfred Ngowi, Central University of Technology