



PRESS RELEASE

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO URBAN CONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES SHOWCASED IN MEDELLIN

Medellin, 11 April 2014: As a legacy of the World Urban Forum's presence in Medellin, a public building has been built in Juanes Park to showcase a low-cost, simple technique of building using local materials and resources.

The "thin tile vault", so called due to its structure of thin layers of interlocking tiles, was opened today in an inauguration ceremony by UN Under-Secretary-General and UN-Habitat Executive Director, Dr Joan Clos, Mayor of Medellin, Anibal Gaviria and Secretary of Infrastructure for Medellin Javier Dario Toro Zuluga.

In a foreword to a publication describing the building technique, Dr Clos said that it could be used to contribute to the efforts to address the urban challenges created by rapid urbanization, population growth and unsustainable city growth.

Thin tile vaulting, also known as Guastavino vaulting or Catalan vaulting, is a construction technique traditional from Catalonia and Valencia, Spain, and patented in the US in 1885 by the architect and builder Rafael Guastavino (1842-1908). It is an economical, fast, ecological, durable, robust and aesthetic structure where thin layers of interlocking tiles and coats of mortar form self-supporting arches and vaults.

Its structural characteristics that allow wide spans using local materials without steel reinforcement, coupled with its low cost and the simplicity of its construction, makes it a suitable and cheap option for a number of purposes such as communal buildings, innovative urban drainage design and affordable housing.

This technique could be used to help meet the urban construction demand in developing countries where suitable local materials are available. In addition, thin tile vaulting for urban basic infrastructure such as storm water drains and sanitation facilities may go a long way in alleviating the urban infrastructure challenges.

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