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The prize-winning house made of sandbags that MMA built

By Lynette Johns

A South African architect and his team have won an international award with a home built of sandbags that could help ease the country's housing crisis.

Cape Town-based MMA architects won R800 000 in an international design competition, beating innovations like a non-turbine, wind-powered generator and a "dry" toilet which collects human waste and converts it to fertiliser.

The two-bedroomed double-storey house in Freedom Park in Mitchell's Plain was designed for a Design Indaba project. A timber frame, reinforced with metal inlays, was filled with sandbags as in-fill for the walls. The bags simply rest on each other, and are not cemented together like bricks.

These sandbag walls are then covered in chicken wire and plastered. Piping and wiring are routed through the timber uprights.

MMA director Luyanda Mpahlwa said he was surprised when he found out they had been shortlisted for the Curry Stone Design prize for humanitarian innovation from the University of Kentucky College of Design, during the IdeaFestival in Louisville last month. The brief was to design a house which would cost no more than R50 000 - the government subsidy.