

ShelterTech Accelerator programme makes its debut in Africa

The Habitat for Humanity Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter's ShelterTech Accelerator programme is making its Africa debut in Kenya, joining previous successful implementation in Mexico and current implementation in India. The programme aims to facilitate housing markets to better meet the needs of the low-income households and seeks to identify, nurture and accelerate Kenyan startups and growth-stage companies that are bringing shelter products and services to the low-income household market.



Image source: Habitat for Humanity

ShelterTech Accelerator Kenya is implemented by BDO East Africa in partnership with Pangea Accelerator, a platform connecting African startups with international investment and expertise and Strathmore University's @iBizAfrica. It is supported by the IKEA Foundation and the Hilti Foundation.

A basic human right

Access to adequate housing for low-income households is a critical development issue facing many countries around the globe. Kenya, where housing is recognised in the Constitution as a basic human right, is no exception. Approximately 61% of Kenyans live in temporary shelter or extremely low-quality housing, affecting the overall well-being of households.

ShelterTech Accelerator Kenya brings together entrepreneurs, government, corporations and development partners in mapping out and showcasing innovation in improving access to shelter. With over 94 applications from across Kenya, the programme launch will unveil 30 startups and scale-ups selected to undergo a six-month acceleration programme, giving them access to expertise, networks and the chance to win investment of up to \$50,000 into their business. The programme will run from November 2018 until May 2019.

"The ShelterTech Accelerator Kenya will contribute to the government of Kenya's affordable housing pillar that aims to have at least 500,000 affordable homes in all major cities, while ensuring 350,000 people get jobs in the housing sector by 2022," says Jane Otima, Habitat for Humanity's associate director for market systems and entrepreneurship.

Building and expanding inclusive housing markets

According to BDO's CEO Sandeep Khapre, the ShelterTech Accelerator programme is an innovative initiative that will facilitate achievement of Habitat for Humanity Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter's objective to build and expand inclusive housing markets.

According to Pangea's CEO, Jonas Tesfu, the startup ecosystem continent-wide, if given the right tools and means to invest, is as vibrant as any other industry across the globe. Tesfu notes that Africa remains very attractive as a new startup frontier: "Africans and non-Africans alike are looking to be part of its rapid development and are seeking ways to make this happen."

Habitat for Humanity's Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter views the ShelterTech Accelerator as an efficient and structured mechanism of evaluating large numbers of ventures with the aim of building a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem in the still nascent affordable housing space.

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