

AIT Consulting, Habitech Center, NATS and partners unveil 'Affordable Social Housing and Sanitation Solution' to Nigerian delegation

The Asian Institute of Technology through its AIT Consulting arm and partners from Dubai and India pitched its vision for a green and affordable urban housing development in Nigeria to senior officials visiting the campus on 19 January 2015.



The proposed "Affordable Social Housing and Sanitation Solution" is a public-private partnership initiative designed for Abuja, Nigeria. It combines AIT home-grown technologies in low-cost, integrated housing construction with sustainable, re-useable sanitation systems.

Patented Nivara Tantra technology from AIT Habitech Center, and decentralized wastewater management systems developed by researchers based at Naturally Acceptable and Technologically Sustainable (NATS) – an AIT project funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – underpin the AIT Consulting-led proposal to tackle the critical housing shortage in Nigeria.

AIT President Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai was joined by Mr. C.S. Tiwari and Mr. Nitin Marwah from MGT, Dubai, and Dr. Praful Naik, Director and CEO of Prashak Techno Enterprises, India, in welcoming ten high-level delegates representing Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN).

Led by Mr. Umar Gambo Jibrin, Director of Mass Housing of Nigeria, the delegation is responsible for sourcing an appropriate technology for planned mass housing developments. With thousands of houses to be built in Nigeria over a short time-span, the guests explored the possibility of using AIT's innovative modular houses technology under the Habitech Center, integrated with AIT's environmental expertise.

"If this project is realized, international industrial partnerships will be a new trademark of AIT, in addition to its continued human resource development roles in the international arena, President Worsak said via his social media account. The mass-scale implementation of AIT technology for large-scale housing developments in Africa would be a great boon to the institute, he said.

The officials considered details of a 5,000 residential unit project outlined by Dr. Naik, Dr. Naveed Anwar, Executive Director, AIT Consulting, Dr. Siddharth Jabade, Special Liaison to AIT Consulting, Mr. Gyanendra Sthapit, Director, Habitech Center, and Dr. Nawatch Surinkul, DWATS Management Specialist / NATS.

President Worsak assured the visitors of AIT's full technical support for the ambitious initiative, saying the pilot project could be a "small, giant step forward" towards providing clean and affordable housing for urban dwellers across the country. "You can be our partner to promote these sustainable technologies for the sake of mankind," he said.

Dr. Naik unveiled the 3-phased master plan, noting that the new community would be "holistic, safe, clean and green" for all residents. It would also be totally self-reliant and include full amenities for education, health, commerce as well as public utilities, he said.

Dr. Naveed emphasized the beneficial attributes of AIT Habitech's low-cost, interlocking brick construction method, saying it is green and sustainable, disaster resilient, durable in the long term, cost effective, simple, and locally sourced.

Nigeria faces a huge housing deficit and needs to build 17 million dwellings, said Mr. Oladapo Akinboye Fakeye, Special Assistant of the CEO, FMBN, explaining his bank's mandate to provide low-cost mortgages.

Thanking AIT for the preliminary briefing, Ms. Eucharia Onimisi Alozie, Director PPP, Federal Ministry of Housing and Non-Executive Director, FMBN, asked for further enhancement of the proposal in terms of more detailed cost assessments, layout schemes, housing designs, and analysis of beneficiaries' preferences.

The visit by the Nigerian officials brings into focus the significance of the housing issue facing the country and the tremendous opportunities the project offers all partners, Mr. Tiwari said. Also representing MGT, Mr. Marwah, indicated the cost of the individual units would be very competitive in terms of the Nigerian housing market.

Following the meeting, the delegation visited campus structural engineering and testing facilities at the AIT School of Engineering and Technology, and sanitation technology testing and research facilities at the AIT School of Environment, Resources and Development. The delegates concluded the day by touring the Habitech Center and the AIT International School, located on campus.

Later, on January 21-22 the Nigerian officials paid field visits to the Habitech Resettlement area in Phang-nga, Phuket province and the NATS constructed wetland located on Phi Phil Island in southern Thailand.

