

# Business Standard

## Ashoka Foundation, TUV to develop certification for affordable housing

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Having pioneered in affordable housing with projects like 'Umang Lambha' in Ahmedabad, Ashoka Foundation is now working on developing a certification standard for the sector with TUV Rheinland India.

A first of its kind certification in India, the same will be made available by Ashoka Innovators for the Public, India and TUV Rheinland to different stakeholders who would like to be a part of the affordable housing market.

Signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with TUV Rheinland for developing a certification in affordable housing, Vishnu Swaminathan, director of Ashoka Housing For All said, "Affordable housing has a huge market potential and can have tremendous impact on people's lives. By seeking to develop a rating system, we intend to empower the low-income customers with a tool to help take qualified decisions about their houses. TUV Rheinland is a credible international player and its experience in the field of certifications makes it a valuable partner in this initiative."

The MoU will define the framework within which organisations can create a credible rating system for affordable housing projects in India, and will be accessible to the public. While TUV Rheinland will develop the certification in consultation with Ashoka, both the parties will also seek feedback from other experts in the affordable housing segment for the development of the certification.

The certification will help outline a successful model for profitability in the construction of affordable houses and set benchmarks for quality and best practices. Through this initiative, TUV Rheinland and Ashoka intends to create a sustainable rating system that will contribute to a socially responsible way of tapping into the affordable housing market in India.

"The certification is a much needed step in the right direction. With its Housing For All initiative, Ashoka has been significantly contributing towards the affordable housing sector in India for the last two years. Drawing from this expertise, Ashoka and TUV Rheinland are hoping to change the perceptions of housing for the informal sector by these certifications," said Enrico Ruhle, managing director of TUV Rheinland India.

The certification will comply with applicable law, policies, rules and regulation and will be easily adaptable for use in various parts of India and all over the world, Swaminathan further stated.

The foundation has provided around 792 affordable residential properties under its Housing For All program. "We intended to offer units for people who do not have a salary slip or statement and find it difficult to avail loans. But for this, we needed support of a developer with land accessibility and an organisation that could aggregate the end users. Which is why we tied up with DBS Affordable Home

Strategy Ltd. and SAATH for offering affordable housing," said Swaminathan.