

ii2i in PropTech

insights in2 innovation

Across Africa, PropTech companies are shifting and simplifying how we buy, sell, and manage properties. Many of these companies are still in their start-up phase, working towards the application of technology in favour of some change in along the housing value chain. All are looking for capital to support their growth. Their increasing prominence notwithstanding, there remains limited awareness and information regarding the detail of their operations, the problems they solve, and the opportunities they offer.

New technological applications in the property, finance, construction, and urban management sectors can change not only what and how we deliver and manage affordable housing, but also how we think about it and what we can contemplate achieving.



Efficiencies: PropTech offers the opportunity to change the structure of supply chains, breaking them down and reconfiguring them in more efficient ways

Access: PropTech in finance can broaden the market, making products and services more accessible to a wider array of people, with better pricing, more appropriate payment terms, and more intelligent risk management interventions.

Scale: PropTech not only enables economies of scale, but also of process. This allows for smaller players to participate and provides opportunities for increased collaboration and product innovation.

LaborHack™

Laborhack is a digital platform connecting businesses and homeowners to a pool of trained, tested, and vetted skilled construction artisans available on demand.

Website: <https://www.laborhack.com/>

LinkedIn Page: <https://ng.linkedin.com/company/laborhack-limited>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/laborhack/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/laborhack_ng



Date founded: 2019



Founders:

Oare Ehiemua-Ochui (CEO and Founder)



Countries of operation: Nigeria and Kenya



PropTech category: Digital Innovation



Housing value chain category: Construction and Building Materials



Funding round: Pre Seed



Amount Raised: US\$ 350 000

With a network of over 5000 certified artisans, LaborHack's certification programme is internationally recognised and benchmarked against the UK Engineering Construction Industry, Training Board (ECITB) among others. LaborHack has various solutions for businesses including; LaborHack for Construction, LaborHack for Maintenance, LaborHack for Facility Managers, and LaborHack for Installations. Businesses benefit from a streamlined hiring process that enables hiring of skilled and vetted workers in minutes. Homeowners can hire skilled artisans on the LaborHack platform for household related tasks that include cleaning, electrical repairs, maintenance, and plumbing.

Source: <https://www.laborhack.com/>

the interview

Can you give a quick overview of your organization and the impact you believe it is having? What do you do and what problem are you solving? Where do you operate?

LaborHack is reimagining the future of Africa's construction industry by **"building Africa's largest pipeline of skilled and vetted construction artisans for local and international projects."** With operations in Nigeria and Kenya, Oare notes that Laborhack has built a network of over **5,000** artisans, including plumbers, carpenters, electricians, masons, welders, and solar technicians.

Locally, LaborHack solves the problem of finding qualified and reliable construction workers. By conducting rigorous assessments and background checks, Laborhack ensures businesses and homeowners have access to qualified artisans. Oare explains:

"The main issue is that there's no proxy in the market to give businesses and homeowners comfort around the quality of workmen that they are engaging for services or projects, and LaborHack helps to bridge that gap by serving as a proxy. We do that by running theoretical and practical assessments on artisans, also taking them through a digitized version of a soft skills training programme and background checks to ensure the provision of high quality services."

Internationally, LaborHack addresses the global shortage of skilled construction labor. Oare pinpoints *"the problem that we've seen is the fact that in many countries around the world, there is an aging population, and you also find that younger people who could take on some of these construction-related jobs would rather not."* With a growing pool of talented artisans in Africa, Laborhack bridges the gap between supply and demand by connecting African professionals with opportunities worldwide. To expand its reach and enhance product offerings, Laborhack collaborates with a range of local and international partners.

Oare's Journey: From OPL Academy to LaborHack

Oare has garnered over 15 years of experience in human resources across the financial, oil and gas sectors in Nigeria and the USA. After completing her MBA in Spain, Oare moved back to Nigeria to work in a private equity firm. Oare decided to leave the firm after three years and established OPL Academy, a not-for-profit employment accelerator focused on upskilling construction artisans.

"I observed that there is high unemployment, youth unemployment in the country, and that the construction industry is one of the largest employers of labour in Nigeria. I also felt that construction artisans in particular were often overlooked and underserved."

Oare Ehiemua-Ochui , CEO and Founder of LaborHack



OPL Academy recruits artisans from educational institutions such as technical colleges, polytechnics, and universities. While these artisans possess strong technical skills, OPL academy recognised the importance of soft skills for professional success and establishing long lasting client relationships.

In addition to providing artisans with comprehensive soft skills training in emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and problem-solving amongst others, OPL Academy also connects them to their first job opportunities. Oare reflects that three years after inception, some community members requested access to project related opportunities rather than internships or full time placements. However, OPL Academy was not set up to meet this need. Following difficulties in finding a suitable partner, **Laborhack was developed as a solution to connect skilled artisans with flexible job opportunities.**

One Precious Life (OPL) Academy conducts a variety of training and empowerment programs targeted at corporates and artisans in Nigeria's construction sector. Learn more about OPL Academy's impact by visiting the website: <https://www.oplacademy.org/>

the interview

How have you financed your business so far? What are your aspirations for capital?

Laborhack successfully raised an angel round of \$350,000, exceeding its initial target of \$250,000. This oversubscribed round demonstrates strong investor confidence in LabourHack's potential.

Laborhack is currently seeking \$500,000 in pre-seed funding to fuel its continued growth. The company's participation in the Techstars Toronto accelerator program has provided global exposure, access to a strong network of entrepreneurs, and valuable mentorship.

As a company with a strong social impact mission, Laborhack is actively seeking impact investors who align with their goals. Laborhack's intervention in the construction industry provides workers with access to employment opportunities while also increasing their income earning potential.

Can PropTech work in the affordable housing market or is it better suited elsewhere in real estate? What are the issues that are influencing your answer?

Oare thinks PropTech has a vital role to play in the delivery of affordable housing. Oare adds *"I definitely think that part of the reason why PropTech exists, is to aid the development of sectors like affordable housing. Technology has the potential to improve efficiencies and provides opportunities for increased collaboration and product innovation."* She envisions that artisans registered on Laborhack's platform could also contribute and play a role to aid the growth of the affordable housing sector.

In your opinion, what is needed to support the growth of proptech interventions to address the challenges facing 'affordable housing' in particular?

To accelerate PropTech's impact on affordable housing, Oare notes that strategic partnerships between PropTech companies and traditional real estate players are essential. By collaborating, each of the actor's strengths can be leveraged, silos broken down, and innovation driven at a faster pace.

How can we bridge the gap between the different generations of real estate practitioners to collaborate and co-develop solutions that benefit the housing delivery value chain and more specifically, the end-user?

To promote collaboration and develop innovative solutions, Oare thinks efforts to enhance the visibility of PropTech companies should be encouraged. Furthermore, open dialogue and partnerships between key decision-makers are crucial to break down barriers.

Rather than view proptech companies as competitors, Oare thinks traditional real estate players should view them as "collaborators to further scale their growth."

While the regulatory environment in Nigeria and Kenya is generally supportive, Oare opines that there is room for improvement. Stronger policies and enforcement regarding worker quality and standards are essential to ensure safe and sustainable construction practices. Looking forward, Oare believes that LaborHack can play a pivotal role in working with governments to vet workers and promote quality standards thus alleviating issues around building collapses or unsustainable building practices.

Where do you expect your company to be in 5 years' time - what are the key challenges that you feel you need to overcome to meet your goals?

In 5 years' time, **Laborhack aims to be a leading regional player, expanding its operations nationally (Nigeria) and into key construction hotspots across Africa.** The company's focus will be on connecting skilled African artisans to both local and global construction projects, solidifying its position as a trusted platform for the construction industry.

CAHF Interview Series



The Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa (CAHF) has been operating as an independent think tank in South Africa since May 2014, pursuing its mission of making Africa's housing finance markets work. CAHF's work extends across the continent, and it is supported by and collaborates with a range of funders and partners.

CAHF brings information to the market place to enable stakeholders in the public and private sector to make policy and investment decisions in favour of improved access to affordable housing. Our emphasis is on the role that finance plays in realising this, and we champion market intelligence—data, market analytics and research—to stimulate investor interest and to support better policy.

You can access CAHF's website [here](#). Visit our [project page](#) to learn more about CAHF's work in exploring the current and potential role of PropTech across the housing value chain.

We urge you to also read this blog on [Innovation in affordable housing: Making the pieces fit together](#).

For more information, please contact David Chiwetu: David@housingfinanceafrica.org

Proptech

Proptech 54 is a pre-seed startup accelerator based in Lagos, Nigeria that helps aspiring and solo entrepreneurs, and startups get their initial traction plus funding. At Proptech54, we are excited about the opportunities in the emerging proptech industry in Africa. We are building a community of early stage proptech startups and helping them pilot through our 16 weeks accelerator program and early stage investments.

Our fulfilment is the human and economic impact that our early stage proptech startups are making across the continent. We are biased towards proptech startups solving solutions related to net zero and the 17 sustainable development goals.

You can access Proptech 54's website [here](#)



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