We are three urban planners with diverse backgrounds in architecture, fabrication and applied research. As Africans, we have seen how urban inequality enhances outcomes for some and leaves many others behind. This experience fuels our passion for Somoto to ensure that young people can participate in Kenya’s changing economy.

Somala Diby
somala@somoto.io

Somala has a background in Housing Policy, Community-Based and Applied Research. She holds a Master in City Planning from MIT and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Columbia University.

Sofia Gulaid
sofia@somoto.io

Sofia has a background in urban design, fabrication, and refugee services. She holds a Master in City Planning from MIT and a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Yale University.

Sarah Rege
sarah@somoto.io

Sarah has a background in Architecture, Graphic Design and Communication. She holds a Master in City Planning from MIT and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Minns University.

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Currently, many young people lack the creative skills that they need to secure the highest income. They face major disadvantages in the job market: forty percent of Kenya’s population is younger than 15; thirty percent is unemployed, and eighteen percent is younger than age 18. Public schools are not yet equipped to prepare students for a changing economy.

We know that creativity fuels economies. For the last three years, creativity was the most sought-after skill on LinkedIn. Research also shows that students from low-income families are less likely to graduate and are more likely to drop out of high school if they do not participate in creative activities like art. Young people in Kenya need access to spaces, tools, and guidance that can enhance their creative skills and help them secure the education they need to provide a solution.

**What is somoto?**

Somoto aims to foster the next generation of African creators. We do this by transforming existing community infrastructure in informal settlements into communal spaces for creative education.

**Motivation & context**

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**The somoto process**

First we identify existing community spaces that are already connected to the internet and electricity.

Then we redesign these spaces to be more conducive to learning.

Next we equip these spaces with new tools, software, and hardware. We know that space and tools alone aren’t enough. So we also connect local educators.

Together, these interventions activate collaborative creative learning experiences.

**How we collaborate**

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**The Current support for somoto**

Somoto was selected for the 2021 cohort of MITdesignX, the School of Architecture and Planning venture accelerator program dedicated to design innovation and entrepreneurship. Somoto was also a 2021 finalist cohort for the PKG IDEAS Social Innovation Challenge.

With $11,000 in start-up funding, we are in search of opportunities to secure corporate partnerships and sponsorships, as well as design and fabrication expertise, to support our pilot in Spring 2022.