

somoto

optimizing access to creative education

Co-founders

We are three urban planners with diverse backgrounds in architecture, fabrication and applied research.



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.Arch from Virginia Tech.



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.



Somala Diby
somala@somoto.io

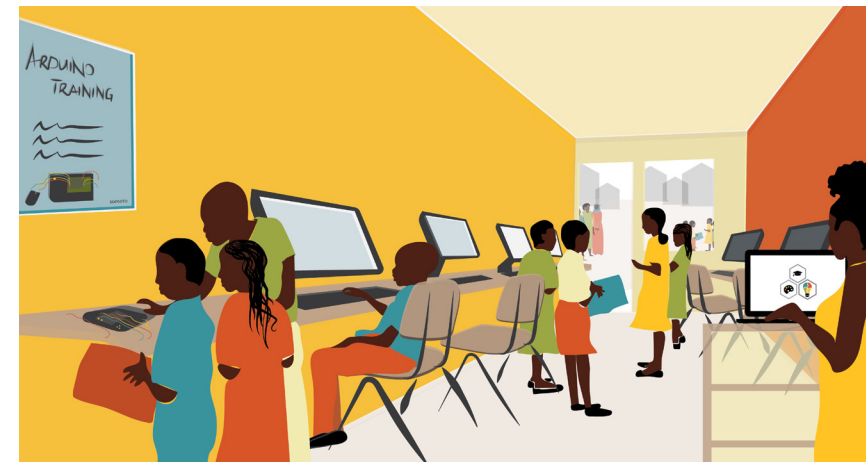
Somala has a background in Housing Policy, Community-Based and Applied Research. She holds a Master in City Planning from MIT and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Columbia University.

Contact Us

Visit our website at somoto.io or send an email hello@somoto.io.

What is somoto?

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



Motivation & context

As the "Silicon Savannah," Nairobi is a leading force in Africa's creative economy. Despite the energy and capital fueling new levels of design and innovation, many young people are excluded from these opportunities.

Currently, many young people lack the creative skills that they need to survive the changing economy. They face major disadvantages in the job market: Sixty percent of Kenya's population is younger than 24, yet 80 percent of the unemployed are younger than age 35. Public schools are not yet equipped to nurture student creativity and close the skills gap.

We know that creativity fuels economies. For the last three years, creativity was the most sought after soft skill on LinkedIn. Research also shows that students from low-income families are less likely to drop out of high school if they participate in creative activities like art.

Young people in Kenya need access to spaces, tools, and guidance that can enhance their creativity. We believe that low-income communities already have the infrastructure to provide a solution.



Rendering of Konza Technopolis, Nairobi County

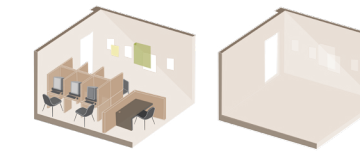


Young people at a cyber cafe in Kibera Settlement

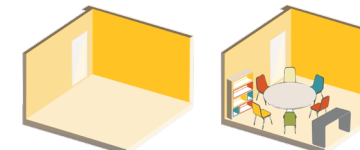
The somoto process

Somoto has developed a model that uses small-scale, low-cost interventions to transform existing community assets like cyber cafes into communal spaces of creative education.

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



We **redesign** these spaces to be more conducive to learning.



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.



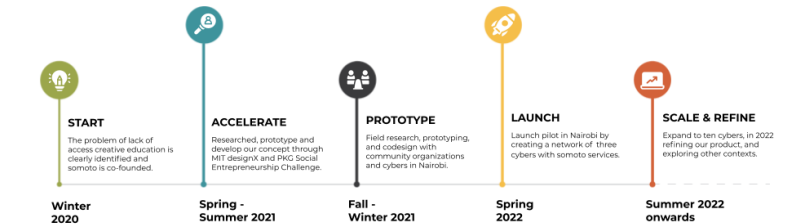
How we collaborate

Somoto partners with cybers, public schools and community-based organizations as future Somoto sites. We also partner with corporate sponsors and Kenyan app developers for in-kind donations of software and hardware, and local universities for volunteer educators. In turn, we take care of design and spatial interventions, collect and curate tools, and recruit and manage volunteer facilitators.



Our journey

We founded Somoto in late 2020, researched, prototyped and developed our concept throughout 2021, and plan to launch our pilot with three cyber cafes in the spring of 2022, then begin to scale and refine.



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.

