

## Press Release

### **After four years of development: Munich social start-up presents sustainable, modular construction system for informal settlements (slums)**

- Milestone: Start Somewhere successfully develops a flexible, reusable, cost-effective and fireproof building system for buildings in slums
- Outlook: By 2020, Start Somewhere plans to build a stone production workshop and a school building in Kibera slum, Nairobi
- Munich, January 19, 2019 - After four years of intensive development, the Munich-based social start-up Somewhere is presenting today for the first time to the public the innovative building system that will improve the living conditions of people in slums.

World-wide more and more people live in slums. In 2015 there were about a billion people according to Slum Almanac of UN Habitat. Every seventh person on this earth lives in a slum. Since his first visit in the Kibera slum near Nairobi in 2011, architect Oliver von Malm has been driven by two questions: How can we use architecture to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers? And how can we combine this with a bottom-up approach that enables local people to help themselves?

The theoretical basis for the new building system was laid by von Malm in his architectural master's thesis in 2016. Together with Kristina Cress and Silvia Hesse, he founded a non-profit limited liable company in 2017 and continued to work on the technological development of the building system. Since November 2017, Start Somewhere has received support from PERI, one of the leading companies in formwork and scaffolding technology, as an important partner in technology development, and from a research team of structural engineers and materials scientists. Specifically, with its technological know-how, PERI consulted on the development and provided the necessary infrastructure as well as materials for the development and testing of the building blocks. In addition, the two project partners jointly developed a formwork system for the easy casting of the hollow concrete blocks, with which the slum dwellers will be able to produce the blocks on site in independent workshops.

During the development of the new Start Somewhere construction system, various requirements for the special situation in slums have been taken into account:

- Flexible floor plans: In order to make the best use of the unevenly shaped plots in the slum, the wall segments can be folded steplessly.
- Reusable: Since slums are informal settlements, the inhabitants can only own the buildings but not the land and can lose their dwellings, for example through road construction measures by the government. The mortarless construction system makes it possible to dismantle the buildings manually at any time and rebuild them elsewhere.

- Affordable housing: The new buildings are not only more aesthetically pleasing and of higher quality, but also, thanks to the material-saving use of concrete, they are as inexpensive as the common construction methods using mud, wood, and corrugated iron.
- Fire-proof: In slums, fires can occur often and spread quickly due to the dense population and the wooden construction. The new construction system completely dispenses with the use of wood.

Eight years after Oliver von Malm's first visit to Kibera, Start Somewhere has reached an important milestone: the initial idea has grown into a sustainable building system for slums that meets all the requirements. Von Malm, with the support of PERI and the research team, decided on a hollow, thin-walled concrete block about 60 cm in length, 25 cm wide and 18 cm high. The highlight is that the stones can be connected without mortar. The walls are then filled with mud to ensure a good thermal insulation. The plug-in principle is important because it not only makes the construction easier and thus makes the construction phase cheaper, but it also allows the buildings to be dismantled and reused at any time.

The bricks are hollow and thin-walled, which saves material and cost. A special feature, compared to most of the modular building systems available to date, is that the walls can be freely adjusted to achieve any angle in the floor plan so that no piece of the building ground remains unused.

Oliver von Malm: "We are very grateful for the diverse support in the development of the new construction system. For Start Somewhere, the support from PERI and the research team was particularly important, as it not only significantly accelerated the entire development process but the result has also become much better than we could have achieved on our own."

Von Malm on the next steps: "Now we have the basis for the buildings. In the follow-up project that is already underway, we are now primarily concerned with the process: that the people in the slums should create something themselves. In short: value creation in the slums and change from the inside out".

The next goal of Start Somewhere is to construct a first workshop that will employ slum dwellers and to erect a school building in Kibera as a pilot project by 2020.

## Über Start Somewhere

*Start Somewhere* gemeinnützige GmbH is a social start-up based in Munich with eight years of experience in development cooperation in one of the largest slums in Africa: Kibera, Nairobi (Kenya). The vision of Start Somewhere is the sustainable improvement of living conditions in the slums of this world. Concretely, *Start Somewhere* develops a flexible, reusable, cost-effective and fireproof construction



system for buildings in slums. The resulting hollow concrete blocks can be assembled and disassembled by hand as a modular, mortarless plug-in system. For the first time, any angle can also be realised steplessly in the floor plan.

In this way, the first school building is to be constructed as a pilot project in Kibera by 2020. Start Somewhere wants to enable the slum dwellers to produce the hollow concrete blocks themselves in a workshop on site and thus erect better buildings in the slum. Jobs and a local construction industry are created so that the added value remains in the slum.

As a non-profit organization, *Start Somewhere* supports two schools in the Kibera slum with currently more than 800 children through donations. This includes two daily meals at school, medical care and school equipment.

### **Das Unternehmen PERI**

With a turnover of € 1,560 million in 2018, PERI is one of the largest manufacturers and suppliers of formwork and scaffolding systems. With around 9,500 employees, 70 subsidiaries and well over 160 warehouse locations, PERI serves its customers worldwide with innovative system equipment and comprehensive services for all aspects of formwork and scaffolding technology.

### **Note to the editors:**

We are happy to provide you with pictures. Please contact our media contact.

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