



# Omega SmartBuild's housing project takes off

BY JOSEPH OLANYO

**Kampala, Uganada - A low cost housing project expected to bridge the housing gap in Uganda has taken off with the pilot project near completion at Kakungulu Estates off Entebbe road.**

The project being undertaken by Omega SmartBuild, is targeting 400 homes in various localities. Omega SmartBuild Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr Frithjof Wiese, said the company is looking at plots in Entebbe, Namamve, and Temangalao among other sites. "Our production capacity is 17,500 homes a year. We have started with a pilot project of 10 homes for the market to appreciate, then we go to 180 houses and 400," Wiese said during the tour of the project recently. Flanked by Omega SmartBuild President, Mr Cato Kemmier, Wiese said the production capacity is dependent on the technology being used.



Omega SmartBuild President, Mr Cato Kemmier ( R ), explains how the housing technology works as Omega SmartBuild CEO, Mr Frithjof Wiese (middle) and Dusty Garus, President/CE Lodestar International ( L ) look on **Photo By J. Olanyo**

Instead of blocks and columns, the company applies a new technology, where durable resistant steel frames are used for construction all through.

Wiese, said the company will build the similar three bed-roomed self contained homes in all the East African countries.

"We have considered all the social aspects in this project. The guarantee is that they will be cheaper than any other housing," Omega SmartBuild CEO said. He did not indicate the cost of the units.

The project comes in a wake of a housing deficit being experienced in the

country. Statistics show that Uganda currently suffers a housing deficit of 550,000 units across the country with urban areas soaking up most of the pressure with 160,000 units needed. Kampala, the administrative and commercial capital has a deficit of 100,000

units

Experts have warned that with Uganda's rapid population growth and high rates of rural-urban migration, the slow development of housing could drive the country to crisis levels when eight million extra people will require housing by 2020.

The project is being funded through a \$10 million line of funding.

The Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (Norfund) in partnership with dfcu Bank Uganda, signed a \$10 million (Shs 20 billion) loan aimed at enabling dfcu Bank to expand its operations in Uganda.

The new credit line signed by dfcu Bank Managing Director, Mr. Juma Kisaame, and Mr Roland, Managing Director of Norfund, in November 2010, will go a long way in addressing the growing need in the Ugandan market for longer-term funding in key areas such as com-

mercial mortgages, home loans, leases and Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) loans. "Norfund and dfcu Bank share the believe in private sector-led growth by supporting entrepreneurial individuals or entities to create sustainable business," Mr. Kisaame said during the ceremony.

Experts knowledgeable in the housing industry contend that the only way to bridge the housing gap is through the new technology. The low cost housing project is expected to bridge the gap of housing shortage in the country, especially Kampala, the capital city.

Given the fact that Uganda and her East African Community (EAC) counterparts are used to the traditional technology of blocks, the project is starting as a pilot in a community atmosphere.

However, when the public assents to the technology, the long term plan is to construct up to 2,000 houses.