

SLURC

SIERRA LEONE URBAN RESEARCH CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Sierra Leone Urban Research and Development News | Vol. 9 | Sep 2019



Content	Page
Urban Transformations Conference	1
High-level Delegation Visit and Other Conference Week Activities	2
ARISE Launch in Sierra Leone and International Meeting in Bangladesh	3
SLURC Participates in a Forum for Epidemics Preparedness	
SLURC and ASF-UK Delivers an International Workshop	4
New Capabilities in Spatial Analysis	5
Workshop on Life Changing Assistive Technology for All Project in Banjarmasin	
Transport Innovation Competition and Mapping Freetown's Public Transport	6
SLURC Hosts City Learning Platform	
SLURC Attends a National Workshop of Data Producers and Users	7
SLURC Attends a Five Day Workshop on Analysis of the Resilience of Communities to Disaster	
Recent Publications and Upcoming Events	8

SLURC Hosts Conference on Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone

Thomas Doughty

SLURC successfully hosted a major conference in June, entitled 'Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone: Lessons from SLURC's Research in Freetown' at the British Council, Freetown. Attended by over 150 urban stakeholders - from city to national government, CBOs to NGOs, academia to community members - the conference provided a welcome platform for dialogue on urban issues, and especially informal settlements.

Following an emotional start to the day, with a spoken word performance from Fatmata Shour on her experience of growing up in a Freetown informal settlement after fleeing rural Sierra Leone during the civil war, opening statements were offered by several key delegates. These included the Mayor of Freetown, Njala University's Vice Chancellor, UCL's Vice Provost International and Sierra Leone's Deputy Minister of Technical and Higher Education; all of whom emphasized the importance of research and evidence-based policy and action, and the tangible impact of SLURC's international partnership of equivalence in driving change in Freetown.

Structured around four of SLURC's key thematic research areas, the conference consisted of presentations by SLURC and its partners,



Urban Transformations Conference, Camila Cocina

panel discussions between other practitioners, policy makers, and questions and answers sessions, covering Urban Health, Urban Livelihoods and the City Economy, Urban Vulnerability and Resilience, and Land and Housing. All presentations from the day, together with links to associated publications are available on the SLURC website – go to www.slurc.org and search “urban transformations” to learn more.

Delegates had the opportunity for further debate and deliberation on the day’s themes during table discussions on questions covering topics such as the impact of informality on citizens’ well being, and the levels at which planning should and does happen. There was lively discussion between stakeholders of all sectors and levels.

The conference came at a key moment for urban planning and development in Sierra Leone, with the Transform Freetown Framework and National Development Plan both currently in their implementation phases. The conference has already generated wider discussions beyond the event itself and was featured in several national newspapers, TV and radio bulletins. Many of these can be accessed via www.slurc.org/media. It has also helped to form new relationships in Sierra Leone’s urban sector, for example between SLURC and Bo City Council.

Thanks to all who contributed to the conference, through funding, hosting or participating; this was a landmark event in the progression of the agenda on urban issues in Sierra Leone.

High-level Delegation Visit and Other Conference Week Activities

Andrea Klingel

SLURC welcomed a high-level delegation from University College London (UCL) to Freetown who attended SLURC’s ‘Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone’ conference and held various meetings with important stakeholders to help foster relationships including the British High Commissioner, the Department For International Development (UK Aid), the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education and Njala University’s Senior Management.

The delegation was led by Dame Nicola Brewer, Vice Provost International (UCL) and included Prof. Ijeoma Uchegbu, Pro Vice Provost for Africa and the Middle East (UCL), plus two members of the Global Engagement Team from UCL who were keen to learn about SLURC’s work and achievements of the first 3 and a half years since its inception as a research centre funded by Comic Relief.

The delegation noted how impressed they were by the impact that SLURC’s research and capacity building has



UCL Delegation Visiting Njala University, Thomas Doughty

made so far in Freetown. The delegation were further impressed by the acknowledgement and high esteem that SLURC received from various speakers during meetings and at the conference.

SLURC was originally formed through a partnership with The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU, UCL) of and Institute of Geography and Development Studies at Njala University (IGDS, NU). The visit provided both universities with a unique opportunity to have engaging and fruitful conversations about emerging collaborations and how each organisation could be mutually supported by one another in future.

The delegation had the opportunity to visit Njala University’s Makonde campus and meet with Vice Chancellor Prof. Mansaray and his senior team. The exchange also allowed for the opportunity to consolidate the existing relationship and commit to further support of SLURC in future.

A further activity surrounding the conference week was an internal seminar held by SLURC about knowledge management, ethics and learning including various project leads from different partner research institutions, urban stakeholders and international advisers.

Knowledge Management is an integral part of a sustainability grant from Comic Relief and DFID issued to the Pull Slum Pan Pipul (PSP) consortium in support of the development of better knowledge sharing and creation in Freetown.

Consequently, SLURC is developing a Research Partnership protocol with ethics guidelines and a comprehensive needs assessment which when undertaken, will be developed into a concept for an inclusive online platform where urban stakeholders can share and access data for informed practice and evidence-based decision making to provide better solutions for urban issues in Freetown.

Lively discussions followed exploring the challenges faced by SLURC in knowledge management and ethics procedures, given the various types of research projects and partners that SLURC works with. Furthermore, it was explored how SLURC could continue to support capacity building in Sierra Leone, in the form of a Masters programme on Urban Planning and Development. This would address educational needs that could support more socially just and sustainable urban development.

In September, representatives of SLURC, Njala University and DPU will hold a 2-day workshop in London following their attendance of the 'Human Development Capability Association' conference (9-11 Sept) to develop the concept of a Masters Programme in Urban Planning and Development. All these efforts are aimed at improving the capacity of, and knowledge available to, urban stakeholders in Sierra Leone to enable better informed decision making and interventions based on strong evidence based data.

ARISE Launch in Sierra Leone and International Meeting in Bangladesh

Abu Conteh and Dr. Joseph Macarthy

SLURC and its partners recently launched a five year research project in Freetown called 'Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity' (ARISE). The partnership in Freetown is between the College of Medicine and Allied Health Services (COMAHS), the Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) and the Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA). The Research Hub is led by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) with other partners in Bangladesh, India and Kenya.

The event brought together stakeholders from the project's three research sites (Dworzark, Moyiba and Cockle Bay), policy stakeholders from various government departments and non-state actors working on health systems research and advocacy. The Director of Research and Evaluation from Focus 1000 Mr. Paul Sengeh reflected on overcrowding as one of the key challenges that triggers ill health and poor living conditions in informal settlements in Freetown. He also spoke about the need to reflect on accountability as a dual process wherein the state provides services for communities, while communities themselves protect such vital services as water installations and pipes to ensure safety and improved quality of life.

The two principal investigators for the ARISE consortium in Sierra Leone, Dr. Joseph Macarthy (SLURC) and Dr. Haja Ramatulai Wurie (COMAHS) delivered presentations on the unique partnership in Sierra Leone. While

COMAHS focuses on health systems research, SLURC explores urban development challenges, and



ARISE Sierra Leone Launch

CODOHSAPA with FEDURP specialise in community engagement and participatory planning.

There were also presentations delivered by Dr. Wurie, who summarised the vision of ARISE, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of COMAHS, Professor Mohamed Samai, and Dr. Braima Gogra, who spoke on behalf of the School of Environmental Sciences at Njala University.

The second session of the event was a stakeholder engagement facilitated by Mr. Francis Reffell, Director of CODOHSAPA, in which participants discussed accountability and how it impacts on improvements to health and wellbeing in Freetown's informal settlements. Participants generally expressed a need for communities to be empowered to understand how to address their own social needs.

In June, SLURC together with its Sierra Leonean partners, attended the first international ARISE Hub annual meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh. During the meeting, partners finalised work-plans, agreed on shared concepts and coordinated their protocols. The occasion was also an opportunity to visit Korail - one of the informal communities participating in ARISE. Additionally, the Global Conference on Scaling Up Implementation Science which coincided with the annual meeting in Dhaka was attended by SLURC and other partners including BRAC and IDS.

SLURC Participates in a Forum for Epidemics Preparedness

Abu Conteh

SLURC participated in an international workshop on epidemics preparedness at the Emergency Operations Centre in Freetown this July. The workshop was coordinated by The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to discuss how social scientists could position themselves for epidemics preparedness and responses. Participants were drawn



Change By Design International Workshop, Thomas Doughty

from universities and research institutions in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia and the Gambia. The workshop discussed research ethics during health emergencies with respect to safeguarding and protection of vulnerable groups.

Urban Health Research Officer, Abu Conteh, delivered a presentation on SLURC's work in informal settlements and how communities understand disease pathways, as well as how they apply infection control measures. He also spoke about the different health research collaborations with local and external partners aimed at understanding determinants of health in informal settlements. Participants from various countries made presentations to highlight their institutional contexts and how they contribute to generating knowledge or shaping policies on health, especially epidemics. The workshop ended with the formation of a network called the West Africa Social Scientists Epidemics Response Network (WASSERN), of which, SLURC is a founding member. For more information contact Hannah Rohan LSHTM www.lshtm.ac.uk.

SLURC and ASF-UK Deliver an International Workshop on Visualisation of Data

Niki Sole, Architecture Sans Frontieres-UK

SLURC and ASF-UK recently hosted a two week intensive workshop as part of the Knowledge in Action for Urban

Equality (KNOW) project in Freetown, based on ASF-UK's Change by Design methodology and looking at co-designing platforms and tools for informal settlement profiles. The workshop brought together SLURC's community data collection team, planning staff from Freetown City Council and Bo City Council as well as international participants from eight countries to consider how data can be more accessible for different audiences.

A symposium with a lively panel discussion between FCC, CODOHSAPA, FEDURP and SLURC framed the challenges of data collection and dissemination in Freetown on the first day. The workshop then built upon the rich data-sets on living conditions and amenities in Dworzark collected earlier in 2019 by community data collectors. Engaging with community members from Dworzark, and across the city, the participants focused on how information is accessed and shared at four scales; policy and planning, city, community and home. Working across the scales, national and international participants engaged people from the relevant scale and collaborated in developing proposals for seven outputs that allow information about informal settlements to be shared with different stakeholders. An exhibition held at the Community Centre in Dworzark showcased the process of the workshop and the proposed outputs marking the end of the two week workshop.

Following the participatory workshop, SLURC, with the support of ASF-UK, will begin to test the recommendations

and proposed outputs from the workshop. Over the coming months community-led data from Cockle Bay and Dworzark will be delivered in a number of different audio visual and physically interactive formats.

New Capabilities in Spatial Analysis

Brian Waters

This summer, SLURC has broadened its technical capacities with a focus on visualisation of spatial data. Improving SLURC's spatial analysis capabilities through GIS, combined with standardisation of information and formatting, allows SLURC to offer new services and explore new research opportunities. Visual aids to communicate emerging research can now also be produced quickly and accurately. There is the ability to compare the concerns of zones within communities, which will allow for prioritisation and efficient resource allocation recommendations to partner institutions and the communities. GIS analytics also help SLURC to find clarity on issues which in some cases would not have emerged using traditional research lines, opening new avenues of research and learning.

SLURC aims to continue to develop its staff GIS capabilities which will lead to greater communication, better understanding, and building a strong spatial research capacity within the organisation.

SLURC Workshop on Life Changing Assistive Technology for All Project in Banjarmasin

Hawanatu Bangura

The AT 2030 project focuses on community-led Solutions in Assistive Technologies for Informal Settlements and it is led by The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London, in collaboration with Leonard Cheshire Disability (UK). The 2.5 year sub-programme SLURC is part of focuses on 'Life Changing Assistive Technology for All' through learning directly from communities living in informal settlements in Freetown, as well as Banjarmasin, Indonesia. SLURC is the local research partner in Freetown, where NGO Kota Kita ("Our City") is the research partner based in Banjarmasin.

A two-week workshop was held in Banjarmasin in May 2019 with a team from UCL, Kota Kita and SLURC. During the workshop, the team visited two communities in Banjarmasin called Pelambuan and Kelayan where the AT2030 project would be implemented. Presentations were held to introduce the wider themes of the AT2030 project, disability, Assistive Technology and issues of informality in the two countries.

The workshop focused on understanding the phases of the project by agreeing timelines, milestones, outputs and agreeing the research methods. The team tested a new tool developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO)



AT2030 Pilot Workshop in Banjarmasin, Hawanatu Bangura

called the rapid Assistive Technology Assessment tool (rATA).

Local partners discussed how to apply it locally and how to feedback on the implementation of the tool to WHO. Further discussions covered how the research activities would engage with people with disabilities, existing AT users, as well as the inclusion of local participants, such as community members, community leaders, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), and relevant NGOs for the data collection and the research.

The rATA tool was tested in selected households in Kelayan which were home to people with disabilities, and representatives of local disability focused CBOs. The exercise identified how the tool could be further improved to support the effective data collection process for this project.

The partners also met with community leaders of the two informal settlements where the Indonesian team would be working (Pelambuan and Kelayan) to present the project, clarify the process, gain their support - especially during the data collection process in their respective communities - and to identify the gaps in the community for intervention. Following the agreed timelines, the rATA tool will be utilised in September 2019 by trained data collectors, many of whom will be part of the communities, in both countries. The survey will give the partners an initial understanding of the access and use of AT in the four communities. Following this process SLURC will explore in more depth the aspirations of people with disabilities and their communities through a selection of participatory methods.

The first phase of the research project will conclude in a synthesis workshop at the beginning of next year in London (UK), where researchers from Indonesia, Sierra Leone and the UK will come together again to learn from each others' experiences, analyse the initial findings and plan phase 2 of the research.

Transport Innovation Competition and Mapping Freetown's Public Transport

Braima Koroma

The Transition to Sustainable Urban Mobility (T-SUM) project is ongoing and has now spatially mapped in GIS the coordinates of transit and collection points of various modes of transport including motorbikes, tricycles and mini-buses (poda-podas) in Freetown. The map which has been developed can now be used to locate areas of the city which are under-served with public transport and spaces which may require physical transport interventions.

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, Sudie Austina Sellu, Research Officer on the T-SUM project, was invited to present at the recently concluded competition of the Urban Mobility Hackathon at the Sensi ICT Hub, Aberdeen: an initiative funded by the Directorate of Science Technology and Innovation. The SLURC team also met with the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation at State House. The discussion led to the establishment of two areas of collaboration, which focused on boosting sustainable urban mobility through utilising our T-SUM research outputs and synergies in both organisations' work on knowledge management and data dissemination for policy and action. We are hoping to engage other urban transport stakeholders in the near future.

SLURC Hosts City Learning Platform (CiLP)

Ibrahim Bakarr Bangura

SLURC recently hosted the first City Learning Platform meeting at the YCMA which focused on scoping the platform's principles of engagement to ensure more effective upgrading of the city in future. The City Learning Platform is intended to provide a democratic space for learning and sharing knowledge about urban issues, especially those of informal settlements. It aims to coordinate and create collaborations to develop solutions



SLURC meets DSTI at State House to discuss how our research on T-SUM in Freetown can be utilised



City Learning Platform Meeting YMCA, Andrea Klingel

for upgrading the city's informal settlements. The discussion came out of a long-held desire for organisations to work together on such issues.

Delegates came from a range of sectors including NGOs, CBOs, Freetown City Council, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment, the Office National Security, Environmental Protection Agency. The event was an open meeting where everyone was given a chance to voice their opinions. During discussions, principles of engagement were set up with thematic areas for organisation to act and collaborate. Another platform meeting is planned for the 25th September, where it is hoped that the principles of engagement can be finalised and actions on identified thematic areas can begin.

SLURC Attends a National Workshop of Data Producers and Users

Mary Sirah Kamara



National Workshop of Data Users, Mary Sirah Kamara

SLURC recently attended an informative workshop exploring data production and sharing methods across Sierra Leone. The workshop was jointly coordinated by Statistics Sierra Leone and UNDP this July at the Miatta Conference Hall, Youyi building. Stakeholders came together to discuss synchronisation and systematisation of data for national development.

The high profile event attracted journalists, research institutions, NGOs and MDAs. In a keynote address, Prof. Osman Sankoh, Statistician General, announced that Statistics Sierra Leone is building an expert team with the intention of bringing measurable changes to the next indices published by Statistics Sierra Leone. It is his ambition that new data produced will significantly assist government policy and national development. There were also engaging presentations from different MDAs and group discussions on data generation, visualisation and utilisation.

The workshop was timely for SLURC which has been developing ways of disseminating research learning and data to a wider and more inclusive audience. SLURC welcomes the collective desire for cross sectoral collaboration on data management from government and other data producers nationally.

SLURC Attends a Five-day Workshop on Analysis of Resilience of Communities to Disaster

Mary Sirah Kamara

During this year's heavy rains in August, SLURC participated in a week-long workshop at Country Lodge, Freetown, which focused on the Analysis of the Resilience of Communities to Disaster (ARC-D) toolkit. The workshop was coordinated by GOAL SL under the GOAL Global Resilience Innovation and Learning Hub (RILH), a project funded by Irish Aid.

The aim of the workshop was to promote and encourage the uptake of ARC-D in Sierra Leone, which could create further opportunities regarding community disaster resilience in future.

Presentations, team activities and group discussions were undertaken to understand the current strengths, benefits and limitations of the ARC-D Toolkit. The ARC-D Toolkit is a methodology which has been developed for use on data collection in communities and has been successfully applied in different countries around the world including Kenya, Malawi, Honduras and Sudan. Presentations and teamwork were also delivered on the CommCare App, a data collection platform that operates on Android devices and stores data on cloud hosted servers.

During training, participants were divided into two groups, one of which visited the community of Kroo Bay and the other Congo Town community. The groups tested the ARC-D Toolkit in communities, and then undertook a number of assessments and a final exam in order to evaluate levels of understanding of the process among participants.



Francis Reffell, CODOHSA, Speaking at Urban Transformations Conference

RECENT PUBLICATIONS and UPCOMING EVENTS

T-SUM Next Steps Workshops

In early December, T-SUM UCL and SLURC in collaboration with Freetown City Council and other actors will be running three deliberative workshops based on key findings to inform implementation strategies on visioning, sustainable mobility trajectories and practical implementation. The workshops aim to produce a prioritisation action plan that would be politically endorsed by all relevant urban transport stakeholders for policy uptake.

Learning Alliance Outputs

The DPU/SLURC Learning Alliance outputs from 2019's fieldwork for seven informal settlements have been published. These consist of policy briefs and videos, all of which can be found on the SLURC website.

This newsletter is also available on our website: slurc.org
Editing and typesetting by Charles Wright

