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For Immediate Release

Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre Celebrates a Decade of Driving Urban Knowledge

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone – 11 February 2026 – The Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) proudly announces its **10th Anniversary Celebration**, to be held on **Monday, 16 February 2026 in Freetown**.

The event will convene Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), city councils, media, civil society, donors, partners, and community representatives to reflect on a decade of pioneering urban research, policy influence, and community engagement that has reshaped Sierra Leone's urban development.

SLURC was founded in 2015 as a partnership between the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London (UCL) and the Institute of Geography and Development Studies at Njala University, with core funding from Comic Relief (UK). Its foundational work began in four informal communities in Freetown. Today, it has expanded to more than 15 informal communities and 8 secondary cities nationwide, becoming a trusted hub for urban knowledge and inclusive development.

"Our work in the initial four communities provided deep insights that served as a proxy for understanding the urban development challenges across Sierra Leone's informal settlements," said Dr. Joseph Macarthy, Executive Director of SLURC. This anniversary celebrates not just SLURC, but the power of partnership. Our first decade proves what is possible when government, academia, private sector, development partners, and communities unite around evidence and a shared vision for just, sustainable, and resilient cities.

A Decade of Impact and Collaboration

Over ten years, SLURC's research has grown from a single project into 48 influential studies, projects, and partnerships, delivering significant outcomes nationwide:

- **Strategic Policy Influence:** SLURC has become a trusted advisor to the Government of Sierra Leone and institutions such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, and UN-Habitat. Contributions include **facilitating** housing dialogues with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MoLHCP); **informing** feasibility studies for regenerating Freetown's Central Business District; and **developing** the Spatial Development Framework for the new Lungi Administrative City.
- **Empowering Local Governments:** SLURC has equipped city councils with essential planning tools, including **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plans** for eight secondary cities and pioneering **Climate Action Plans (CAPs)** for Bo, Kenema, and Makeni. These landmark frameworks translate national climate goals into actionable local strategies.
- **Amplifying Community Voices:** SLURC's foundational commitment is to the informal urban communities. Through initiatives like **Urban SHADE**, **Urban TRACS** and **ARISE** (www.ariseconsortium.org), the organisation champions community-driven research methods such as **photovoice**, **transect walks**, **social mapping** and **governance diaries**. These participatory approaches ensure marginalized residents co-create knowledge and adaptation strategies for climate and health interventions, actively shaping their urban future.
- **Fostering Global and Local Partnerships:** SLURC drives meaningful change through collaboration, linking local expertise with global resources. Partnerships included Learning Alliances with the masters courses at University College London (UCL) or Imperial College London and participation in the CLARE programme, amplifying the voices of the urban poor in international climate dialogues. SLURC also maintains sustained collaborations with the **African Development Bank**, **UN-Habitat**, **UK Aid (FCDO)**, and **World Bank** funded initiatives like the Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project (RUSLP). This partnership model also addresses critical issues like sustainable sand



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extraction, through collaborations with the University of Geneva, UNEP-GRID, and a Swedish Research Council-funded project with the University of Gothenburg and UCL. Together, we harness local knowledge to shape a global research and policy agenda, aiming to avert the socio-environmental risks of the sand crisis.

- The organisation also works with institutions such as the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM, UK), the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of Waterloo (Canada), and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, UK), alongside Sierra Leonean partners including the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP), Institute of Gender and Children's Health Research (IGCHR), and Centre of Dialogue on Human Settlements and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA).

Looking Forward: A Legacy of Learning

As outlined in its **Strategic Plan for 2024-2029**, SLURC aims to cement its legacy as a centre of learning, with ambitions to nurture the next generation of Sierra Leonean urban professionals through degree-awarding programmes.

About the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre

The Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) is a globally connected research institute based in Freetown. It aims to enhance well-being in informal settlements by:

- ▶ Strengthening the research and analytical capacity of urban stakeholders.
- ▶ Improving the quality and quantity of knowledge on informal settlements.
- ▶ Making urban knowledge accessible to those who need it most.
- ▶ Delivering world-leading research to influence urban policy and practice.

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