



SIERRA LEONE URBAN RESEARCH CENTRE

NEWSLETTER

SIERRA LEONE URBAN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT NEWS Vol: 1

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Njala University (NU) and University College London (UCL) Formally Launches The Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) – Connecting Urban Data, Policy and Practice

The Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) is a globally connected Research Centre established through a partnership between the Institute of Geography and Development Studies (IGDS) of Njala University and The Barlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) of University College London. It was formally launched on Wednesday 27th January 2016 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Launch took place at the Centre's offices located on the 2nd floor of 63 Upper Brook Street Freetown. With a vision to improve the wellbeing of urban informal settlement dwellers, the Centre aims to build research and analytical capacity of urban stakeholders in Sierra Leone through the development of a comprehensive information bank on the urban environment, which reflects a diverse set of attributes, from socio-economic heterogeneity and geographic variability, to socio-cultural conditions. Furthermore, the Centre's work is also about sharing and communicating this knowledge to policy makers and practitioners working to improve urban living conditions.



The launch brought together Global Urban Experts, Professionals, Academics, Government authorities, NGOs and CBOs working operating in slums in Freetown, Media agencies and the private sector to exchange and share experiences of inclusive and sustainable urban development with emphases on knowledge management and the value of partnership and collaboration with people and organizations already working in the sector.

The launch also included an inaugural session of the Centre's International Advisory Board composed of distinguished academics from Africa and the United Kingdom. Those with personal attendance included Dr. Michael Walls representing UCL, Dr. Ibidun Adelekan of Ibadan University Nigeria, a Regional expert in urban planning, and Professor Alpha Lakoh of NU. Also in attendance via international conferencing were Dr. Nancy Odendaal of University of Cape Town in South Africa and the African Centre for Cities (ACC) and the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS), and Professor Jo Beal of the British Council

in London, an international expert on urban challenges. As part of its management, Dr. Alex Frediani and Dr. Andrea Rigon, both of DPU UCL were also in attendance. Moreover, these distinguished urban researchers are the co-investigators of the Centre.

The event also highlighted the importance of advocacy and people centered knowledge production and the strong desire for SLURC to become a platform to facilitate collaboration between NGOs, Private sector, City authorities, Government, and Universities. Community groups also saw SLURC as an opportunity to coordinate activities of the various urban actors. It is hoped that through SLURC, a culture of collaboration and knowledge co-production will be achieved.

As in many parts of Africa, Sierra Leone faces a significant challenge in advancing the ‘urban’ in the country’s development agenda, owing mainly to the lack of relevant, evidence-based knowledge on the processes and trends influencing urban development. There is, therefore, a real need for the development of a policy framework to support urban centres in becoming engines of growth and providers of economic opportunities for inclusive development.

CO-INVESTIGATOR 2 (STANDING), PROJECT MANAGER (MID) AND CO-DIRECTOR 2 AT THE LAUNCH EVENT.



While there have been some initiatives to collect data at the local level with the involvement of residents — (examining living conditions, identifying needs, and evaluating interventions) — the scope of data collection and analysis systems as well as reporting mechanisms are limited to a few communities. Moreover, much of the data collected is fragmented, with a need for greater disaggregation to allow for a deeper understanding of the different factors shaping the urban environment

In the absence of a city wide and comparative framework for data collection and analysis — and without clearly defined stakeholders responsible for analysis, synthesis, and reporting — the data that exist remains under-utilized. To bridge this gap, and in response to the need for evidence based research and policy development, the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) was established. This new initiative has started and will continue to work with different urban stakeholders and community groups in implementing research, producing knowledge and providing training to contribute towards Sierra Leone’s urban development policies and practices.

Our research priorities include; urban health, land and housing, urban livelihoods and city economy, and urban vulnerability and resilience. Please follow our work at [#SLURC](#) [@dpu_ucl](#) [@nusierraleone](#)



***PSPPPARTNERSWITHCOMICRELIEFSTAFFANDFACILITATORSATTHE
END OF A PSPP PARTNERS COLLABORATION WORKSHOP***

HITTING THE ROAD RUNNING: THE SIERRA LEONE URBAN RESEARCH CENTRE (SLURC) COORDINATES THE PULL SLUM PAN PIPUL (PSPP) PARTNERSHIP

The PULL SLUM PAN PIPUL Partnership is derived from a desire to strengthen collaboration of the six Comic Relief Grantees/Organizations in their efforts to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers in Freetown. This city level learning and Collaboration partnership was started in May 2013 with the aim to be a permanent feature of urban development actors in Freetown and the country as a whole.

At inception, the partnership includes the Young Men's Christians Association (YMCA), the Youth Development Movement (YDM), Restless Development (RD), the Centre Of Dialogue On Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA) and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC); all with country head offices in Freetown. Since its inception, the PSPP partners have

been holding regular coordination meetings, undertaking joint baseline studies, sharing of technical expertise and coordinating their efforts to engage the Freetown City Council and other state authorities around a city level advocacy forum. The collaboration of this

partnership in response to the Ebola Viral Disease was a case in point that is worthy of note.

Under normal circumstances, the PSPP partnership utilizes a programmatic approach to develop an evidence base that will improve learning on livelihoods of informal settlement dwellers, capacity development of Civil Society Organizations, empowerment, mobilization and advocacy activities of the partnership and the target communities.

As an institution aimed at research, capacity development and knowledge management for urban stakeholders, the establishment of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) in January 2016 was regarded by the PSPP partners as an opportunity to centralize the coordination function of the partnership. Moreover, the Centre will also provide a centralized resource that will store and disseminate knowledge produced by all partners and other urban stakeholders.

Recognising the importance of collaboration, Comic Relief, which provides specific project funding for all the partners, facilitated a process through which the partnership started to jointly develop and implement a collaboration plan beginning 2016. This initiative was aimed at strengthening the collaboration of the PSPP partners. Consequently, SLURC was formally admitted to the Partnership as the sixth partner and assigned the role of coordination.

As the partner assigned to coordinate the collaboration, SLURC is responsible to monitor implementation of the collaboration plan and periodically report to Comic Relief on progress. Furthermore, SLURC will also be responsible to facilitate an annual meeting to share experiences of lead organizations responsible for implementation of specific activities. The outcome of these annual reviews will be a revised collaboration plan.

Freetown Water Crisis – We may have survived it this year

By Joseph Macarthy

The recent water crisis in Freetown was beyond everyone's expectations. From March to nearly the end of May this year, access to safe drinking water in Freetown was very problematic. The same was the case in many other cities and towns in the country. For millions of people in Sierra Leone, the dry season has come to be associated with severe water scarcity. This is in spite of the country's ideal location within the tropics with heavy rainfall, high temperatures and a vast natural vegetation which creates a sound climate to provide residents with regular supply of safe drinking water. Coupled with our vast water resources as a country - the numerous rivers that traverse its terrain as well as the creeks, - Sierra Leone is in pole position to provide all its cities, towns and villages with a continuous supply of safe drinking water. The significance of providing adequate and safe drinking water for the people is already emphasized in Sierra Leone's Agenda for Prosperity as "a necessary precondition for socio-economic recovery at all levels of society..."

In his address on the launch of "WASH, for All: Addressing the Current and Growing Challenge" in May 2013, the Minister of Water Resources, Hon. Momodu Maligi, acknowledged that while water, Sanitation and Hygiene are key to lifting Sierra Leoneans out of poverty and in promoting socio-economic growth, millions of Sierra Leoneans still lack access to improved water supply. In Freetown, such communities as Congo Cross, Aberdeen, Brookfields, Lumley and Central Freetown (especially the Central Business District) which, hitherto, had regular water supply are still faced with acute water shortage. This adds to such



other communities as Mount Aureol, Wilberforce, Hill Station, New England, Leicester Road and Peacock Farm which has persistently grappled with access to regular water supply. "We had always thought that water problems are only for settlements located along the hill slope", Marie Turay, a resident of Tengbeh Town told me. She continued that "nowadays even settlements that were better serviced are today faced with this same water problem". With water supply almost reaching crisis situation in Freetown, the government needs to work hard to deliver on Goal 6 of the UNDP's recently established Sustainable Development Goals which specifically requires countries to "ensure access to affordable water and sanitation for all".

According to the 2015 National Population census figures, nearly 38% of Sierra Leone's population already lives in urban areas, and within two decades, close to 50 per cent of the country's population will be urban dwellers. Nowhere is more densely settled and populated in Sierra Leone than its capital, Freetown. This rapid growth in the population of Freetown creates unprecedented challenges, notable among which is the problem of inadequate water supply and the poor sanitation problems that are painfully felt by thousands of the city residents. Freetown's growing urban population and physical expansion will continue to present daunting challenges for the provision of safe drinking water by GUMA. Research shows that in just a little over thirty years,

Freetown has grown larger, quicker and a lot denser than ever before. However, Planning, infrastructural development and urban services provision of the city

has largely failed to cope with this pace of growth. If we do not plan the next 30 years in the development of Freetown which, arguably, is one of the periods when it (Freetown) will experience its heaviest urban growth, we would have lost another opportunity to deal with the chaotic, dysfunctional and unregulated development of the city. Certainly, it is impossible for a city to be sustainable if it cannot ensure reliable access to safe drinking water and acceptable sanitation for its citizens. Dealing with the rising needs of water and sanitation services in Freetown (including the other cities and towns) is one of the most pressing challenges that the government is now faced with. Managing water in an efficient, equitable and sustainable way in these places has never been as important as it is today. With warnings from the recent water crisis, providing water for close to 3 million people over the next 30 years requires the government to plan by accommodating the future growth of the city or to get them wrong by limiting their considerations only to the current water crisis.

In Freetown, for the many communities that are not connected to the GUMA water distribution network, households have to create their own sources of getting water by digging water wells. Mabinty Kamara, a petty trader who lives at Farrah Lane close to Fourah Bay College explained for example that the only source of water supply in her entire neighborhood is a hand-dug-well in a nearby compound. According to her, Le2, 000 is usually paid to the owner for every five-gallon-sized jerry can full of water. Considering her family size (6), this, surely exerts added economic burden on her thus, preventing her from meeting other livelihood needs of her family. Pa Abu, the water well owner explained that the well was dug purposely to meet the acute water problems usually faced in his community. He continues that because Guma is unwilling to connect his area with water, they needed to provide the service themselves.

The recent water crisis was more severe in the informal settlements, specifically in the Freetown slums where the urban poor who usually lack many of life's basic necessities (safe drinking water, durable housing, secure tenure, adequate sanitation services and access to health services) concentrate. A large proportion of these residents do not use protected water sources for drinking.



For many, the main sources of drinking water are water wells, and unprotected spring water. As water from these sources are mostly untreated, infections found in the water can be a major cause of death in such places. Whenever Freetown faces water shortages, it is the women and children who suffer the most. There are reported evidences of young girls trading sex for a few buckets of water. Some children have lost precious school and study times either in long queues or walking long distances to fetch water. Every year, a number of lives are lost from diseases associated with poor water and sanitation services.

As in many other African cities, infrastructural progress and technical capacity for delivering water have lagged well behind urban population growth in Freetown for several decades. While the government claims that they have repaired much of GUMA's water infrastructure, the recent water crisis showed that

the water distribution systems in Freetown are still inefficient and unmaintained leading to the huge shortage in water supply. A number of the old pipes have deteriorated leading to massive water loss, which in turn affects the availability of water further down the line from the main GUMA dam. In a recent newspaper interview with Bankole Mansaray, the General Manager for GUMA, it was shown that the existing water infrastructure for delivering water in Freetown is already stressed with demand for water being far in excess of the current capacity of GUMA to deliver.

Built since 1965 with a storage capacity of 23.3 billion litres of water, GUMA harvests much of the water in its major dam at Mile 13 during the rainy season which it uses in the dries. However, and as the Water Resources Minister very recently disclosed in his update to the President, this dam which supplies 95% of the water needs of Freetown experiences leakages both to the scour valve and to the water distribution networks. This reduces water pressure from reaching communities existing at the edge of the networks. Besides, several of the pipes that were intended to ensure a constant flow of water are now used only intermittently. As less water flows through the pipes to areas further away from the GUMA dam, only a few households have access to safe drinking water. The frequent water crises faced in Freetown and other places risk decreasing the life expectancy of residents in Sierra Leone. Already, the average life expectancy for a Sierra Leonean is a mere 56 years – being one of the lowest in the world.

The government needs to act urgently by opening up to more flexible solutions in dealing with the water problem. This would include building public-private partnerships whereby GUMA partners with private operators to provide water service to communities that are outside its present distribution system. In particular, private operators can be encouraged to fund, build, and maintain water services for people especially those living in mountain communities where water access is currently problematic. As has been repeatedly pointed out, Sierra Leone has a large volume of ground water that can be abstracted by GUMA and/ or private operators to augment the water reserve in its major dam at Mile 13. At present, the use of ground water is limited to a few households that are usually not connected to the water distribution network. However, to date, the estimated safe yield (per day) of ground water in Freetown is not clearly known to allow licensed usage by the private sector. Moreover, much of the discussions for improving the water sector has continually focused on exploring funds mainly from international and national funding sources. There has been far less discussion of private sector role including a potential investment role by NASSIT. It is broadly recognized that when the coverage of safe drinking water is expanded, a wide range of benefits can be attained. These range from the attainment of longer lifespan to reduced incidence of morbidity and mortality from various diseases. Other social benefits include increased school attendance, lower health costs, and less time and effort devoted to managing water. For women, the time saved could be spent on engaging in other productive activities including providing more time for childcare, socialization, and personal development.

Whether arguing from the rights of people or from a simpler basic needs approach, all the people of a country ought to be provided with safe drinking water. With Sierra Leone ranked among the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with high rainfall, there already exist a huge opportunity to harness the rainwater for supply in all settlements all year round. As Pillar two of the Agenda for prosperity document shows, Sierra Leone has a rich water resource base with run off from its nine major rivers and the river basins amounting to 160 km³. In Freetown however, prospects for harnessing the Orugu dam which was identified to have more potential (than Mile 13) in providing Freetown with water has been lost since much of the water catchment is now heavily settled. Perhaps the only prospect left is the Bankasoka dam in Port Loko which, a recent study showed, has a huge potentials to supply Freetown with water.

Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre Team in Freetown – Sierra Leone

Co- Director 1 - Dr. Joseph Mustapha Macarthy



Dr. Joseph Mustapha Macarthy is an urban planner with specialty in urban development planning and climate change adaptation. He is a lecturer at the Institute of Geography and Development Studies of Njala University. Dr. Macarthy has a PhD in Urban Planning and Management from Newcastle University and MSc. in Urban Development Planning from the University College London.

His research interest is centered on urban planning and climate change. Apart from once serving as a local consultant (urban planner) to the EU-funded Urban Planning Project for Freetown (in 2013), he also provides volunteer service to the UNDP as a member of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Small Grants Program (SGP) in Sierra Leone. He is also a Project Steering Group (PSG) member of the YMCA's 'Pull Slum Pan Pipul Project' which it jointly implements with Centre of Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Reduction – Sierra Leone (CODOHSAPA) and Y Care International (UK). Dr. Macarthy is part of the management of SLURC that provides for the strategic direction of the Centre.

Co- Director 2 - Mr. Braima Koroma



Mr. Braima Koroma is a sustainable development planner. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Environment and Development (First Class) and two MSc degrees in Development Studies (University of Sierra Leone) and Environment, Management and Sustainable Development with Distinction (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK).

Mr. Koroma has a special interest in urban livelihoods, environmental management, climate change and development impact evaluation. He is currently a lecturer in the Institute of Geography and Development Studies, School of Environmental Sciences, Njala University. He has over 10 years' experience of teaching, research, training and facilitation, and consultancy on a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary research to examine complex development problems.

Project Manager - Dr. Ibrahim Bun Kamara



Dr. Ibrahim Bun Kamara is a Strategic Planner and Development Economist with extensive experience in international development, project planning and management and economic policy advisory services. Dr. Bun Kamara has a PHD with Distinction in economics from the University of Cape Town in South Africa, MA in economics from the University of Botswana and a BSc with Honours in economics from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

Dr. Bun Kamara plays the strategic role of coordinating the implementation of the SLURC project; linking "The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) – University College London (UCL) with the Institute of Geography and Development Studies (IGDS) – Njala University (NU) for the establishment and management of this pioneering new Centre in Freetown, bringing together academic researchers, civil society, communities, development practitioners and local and central government to find innovative solutions to urban challenges.

Centre Administrator - Christocia O.E Kawaley



Ms. Christocia Kawaley is the Centre Administrator for the research Centre (SLURC). She serves as focal point for administrative coordination of project implementation activities. She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from Chongqing University in China and a BA Hons in Political Science from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. She has served both corporate and humanitarian/development organizations in different capacities; spanning from general operational system to specialized areas of logistical support to emergency response programs and human resource administration.

Research and Communications Officer - Akopon J. Bertin



Mr. Akopon Bertin is the Research and Communication Officer at the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC). He graduated from the School of Social Sciences, Njala University with Honours Degree in Economics.

He has years of progressively responsible professional experience in research, monitoring and evaluation from BRAC Sierra Leone and Liberia. His significant experience in these areas have provided him with an excellent practical understanding of processes associated with real-time monitoring for the purposes of generating quality data for identifying and addressing bottlenecks in the delivery of services in health, education, agriculture, gender and livelihood. He is currently a researcher and the Centre's focal point for communication and institutional urban stakeholders.



Research and Community Officer - Sulaiman Foday Kamara

Mr. Sulaiman F Kamara is the Research and Community Officer for the Research Centre. He studied at Monash University, Melbourne Australia with a Bachelor's degree, Double major in Geography & international studies.

He has worked as a Data mapping consultant and a Data and communication officer with UNICEF. He was part of the team that implemented an Urban Planning Project that developed the Freetown Structure Plan. His present role at SLURC is to undertake research and act as a focal point for informal communities and related groups.



Office Assistant - Max P Boima

Mr. Max P Boima is the office assistant for the Research Centre. He is a support staff that assists the Centre Administrator. He monitors and upkeeps the office environment and ensures maximum security on Assets and office properties

Sierra Leone Urban Research CENTRE Team in London – UK

Co- Investigator 1 - Dr. Andrea Rigon



Dr. Andrea Rigon is a Lecturer at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London with a background in development studies and research, consultancy and project management experience in several countries. He is particularly interested in the upgrading of informal settlements in the context of pre-existing social conflict. He also has a research interest in the ethnographic study of the practices of development organizations and social movements, particularly in terms of internal power relations and knowledge production. Andrea is a member of the SLURC project management team with strategic direction, capacity development and financial accountability responsibilities.

Co- Investigator 2 - Dr. Alexandre Apsan Frediani



Dr. Alexandre Apsan Frediani is a Lecturer at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London. He is a Development planner specializing in squatter settlement upgrading policies and participatory approaches to development. Areas of expertise include human development, housing, urban development, participation and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. Alex is a member of the SLURC project management team responsible for strategic direction and development of partnership for the Centre.

Dr. Giovanna Astolfo - Project Assistant – UK



Dr. Giovanna Astolfo is presently a Teaching Fellow at the Bartlett DPU, where she teaches in the Urban Intervention Studios, focusing on urban transformations and community driven processes in the Global South. She has always combined teaching, research and practice, working in architectural offices in Venice and São Paulo, on international projects and competitions for the re-appropriation of vacant buildings and marginal areas. She is currently responsible for providing general administrative support to the Co-Investigators and Project Manager including financial reporting and information technology design.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

SLURC will be holding a two weeks training programme in standard research methods for urban development planning. This programme will target practitioners from government, NGOs and civil societies involved in the development planning of urban settlements in Freetown and other urban centres in Sierra Leone. The call for interested participants will be sent to identified stakeholders in the next few weeks.

2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

With the call for proposals out, SLURC will be establishing a web site and resource centre that will host available knowledge on urban issues and make it easily accessible to all stakeholders online and physically at the Centre. The website and physical resource centre are expected to be operational within the next few months.

3. RESEARCH

The Comic Relief project of the Centre includes two major research components for the second and third years. For the first of these, SLURC will be engaging selected stakeholders in order to define the scope and methodology of the research which will focus on the livelihoods of urban informal settlement dwellers.

SLURC has also secured funding for a research project on public health in urban areas from a partnership with the Future Health Systems of John Hopkins University. Relevant partners and stakeholders will be engaged to commence this project in the near future.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF SLURC AFFILIATES

a. SLURC Members:

Key institutional partners of SLURC will be encouraged to become a SLURC Member. Once a year, SLURC will convene a meeting among all of its members to present their work and get feedback on the strategic direction of the centre. Furthermore, members will receive periodic updates through the SLURC newsletter. Potential members include other organisations funded by Comic Relief working in informal settlements in Freetown as well as other relevant NGOs or governmental authorities.

b. SLURC Champions:

The SLURC team will identify key people in Sierra Leone to become champions of the centre within their organization. Appointments will be made particularly among relevant government authorities. The objective of this appointment is to enhance the visibility of the centre and facilitate key institutional support in carrying out SLURC core activities. SLURC Champions will be invited to the same meeting with SLURC Members, where progress of SLURC activities will be presented, and feedback provided.

c. SLURC Associates:

During the implementation of the project, SLURC welcomes researchers that are doing work in areas related to the centre's vision and mission. SLURC can provide them a base to carry out their activities and recognise them as SLURC Associates. For this to take place, researchers will need to send a letter of motivation to the Management Committee to consider their interest.

PARTNERS



Contact Us: Email; i.kamara@ucl.ac.uk, jm72macarthy@yahoo.com, Tel. +232 22 220986, +23276471469/+23279684818