

# SLURC

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## Contents

### **Building Resilience In Freetown: Strategic Disaster Risk Reduction Action Planning** 1

Braima Koroma

### **SLURC Leads A High Level Delegation From Freetown On An International Knowledge Exchange To Cape Town, South Africa** 2

Ibrahim Bun Kamara

### **Formal And Informal Synergies For A Prosperous Freetown** 3

Braima Koroma

### **SLURC Validates Scoping Study On Urban Health In Sierra Leone** 5

Abu Conteh

### **SLURC Delivers Training On Participatory Planning And Design** 6

**How can neighborhood planning bring about inclusive city-making?**

Ibrahim Bun Kamara

### **Upcoming events** 8

### **Building Resilience In Freetown: Strategic Disaster Risk Reduction Action Planning**

Braima Koroma, Co-Director, SLURC

SLURC and its counterparts from the wider Urban Africa Risk Knowledge (Urban ARK) programme at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) of University College London (UCL) has been researching on “Building collective capacity to disrupt urban risk traps” in Freetown. The study aims at understanding risk accumulation over time in Freetown and to apply the practices and resources that had been mobilized by the programme to monitor and study the risk profile of Freetown. The work also examined existing initiatives for disaster risk reduction and the capacities of community residents and other stakeholders to act effectively in that regard.

Preliminary findings from the study were shared and refined to support the creation of several strategic action plans, with each action plan developed at the lowest identified level in the devolved Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) structure. A total of 15 strategic action plans are being prepared by the five Community-Based Disaster Risk Management Committees (CBDRMC) in each of the three districts of the city (western, central and eastern).

The fund management coordinating committee was set-up and has invited proposals from the 15 informal settlements surveyed (5 East (Colbot, Moyiba, Portee-Rokupa, Pamoronko and Old Wharf), 5 West (Cockle Bay, Thompson Bay, Congo Town, Oloshoro and CKG) and 5 Central (Dwazarck, Kroo Bay, Susan’s Bay, Mabella and Magazine). Note that the identified communities are across the Freetown Municipality. They have to prepare and implement strategic Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) action plans to disrupt cycles of risk accumulation at their respective communities. The aim is to combine action research and DRM practices using a number of small projects.

The coordinating committee comprising SLURC, Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), CODOHSAPA and FEDURP is assisting in the review and shaping of community action plans into realistic ventures for the Local Disaster Reduction Management Networks at the community levels.

This committee will also monitor the implementation of the projects. The reviews are geared towards the refinement or restructuring of the proposals submitted to provide the basis to build a shared vision,

based on local needs. Moreover, the review also provided frameworks to operate a management structure that is all-inclusive, transparent, and accountable and with equally shared responsibilities and benefits in order to consolidate and extend respect and trust between all members of the communities involved in the implementation of the CBDRM interventions.

In December 2017, it is expected that each of the action plans created will have been refined and prioritized, with some small seed funding provided by the project for practical interventions that will serve as a hands-on

learning opportunity on community-based DRR.

SLURC envisages to formally launch these strategic action plans with the participation of a number of relevant urban stakeholders including Disaster Management Department, NGOs, CBOs, FEDURP and Media (newspaper, radio and TV) at a formal event in January 2018.

Recent mudslides in Freetown and, in particular, that in the suburb of Regent which resulted in the loss of over 500 lives and the displacement of more than 3,000 people, have highlighted the urgency of risk reduction in Freetown.



Participants engaged in discussions with management and staff of the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town; 24 October 2017.

## SLURC Leads A High Level Delegation From Freetown On An International Knowledge Exchange To Cape Town, South Africa

Ibrahim Bun Kamara; Project Manager, SLURC

One of the programmed means of providing useful knowledge to promote the wellbeing and rights of the residents of informal settlements in Freetown and other urban centres in Sierra Leone is through international knowledge exchanges. These are meant to expose urban stakeholders in Sierra Leone to other urban contexts and institutions. Hence, the international knowledge exchange to South Africa was undertaken to facilitate a learning experience for Freetown urban development stakeholders on October 23 – 27, 2017. This exchange also provided an opportunity to build strong relationships amongst the Freetown stakeholders and the PSPP partners in addition to development of international partnerships.

**1. Objective of the Exchange.** The main learning objective of this exchange is to facilitate conversations around the following question: How can localized interventions of improving living conditions of the urban poor link to city-wide impact that addresses socio-spatial inequalities? This theme has been one of the key concerns that the advisory board of SLURC has pointed out to approach

more explicitly in the centre's activities. As well, this link between localized interventions and city-wide impact has also been prioritized by civil society partners in Freetown as a theme that SLURC could be making a contribution towards. Cape Town is a particular interesting place to explore this issue because of its long tradition of initiatives led by civil society to improve quality of life in informal settlements in a city that has been heavily shaped by its socio-spatial inequalities generated by colonial, apartheid and more recently market enablement urban policy and planning. Through seminars, site visits and workshops, the participants met a series of urban practitioners in Cape Town that has been attempting to move beyond localized targeted spatial initiatives and enabling initiatives aimed at policy impact and wider urban transformations.

**2. Exchange participants.** This exchange involved the participation of a total of 13 participants from strategic urban development stakeholders in Freetown and London. They included staff of SLURC, Freetown City Council, Department of Housing, Department of Country Planning,

Office of National Security, YMCA, FEDURP, CODOHSAPA, Restless Development, and Radio Democracy.

The selection of the participants above is based on their potential to influence urban development policy and practice from a professional point of view. The team is therefore an integration of research and practice professionals from Central and Local Government, as well as the NGO community of practice. This was aimed at building synergies and the spirit of collaboration between the institutions, post the exchange.

**3. Consolidated learnings.** In addition to the daily debrief sessions, the exchange ended with a special session to start the process of consolidating and firming up the learnings from the exchange as a whole. Key lessons noted were as follows;

- Collective learning is critical. In the context of Sierra Leone, this implies expanding the boundaries beyond PSCP network and being more systematic.
- The issue of government relationship with communities is critical. The team needs to develop strategies to address the questions of how can communities be involved in development of national or municipal policies and how information and research from communities can be used in policy development and implementation.
- There has been a clear demonstration of the importance and significance of partnership and collaborative engagement at different scales and levels with supporting networks being able to synergize.
- At the heart of upgrading is commitment of communities and ensuring participation of different actors. However, we should recognize that communities need to be assisted to step up their drive to participate in development planning and policy.
- Approach to upgrading in Cape Town is incremental. Also, the process should start from communities. To contrast with realities in Freetown, taking formal electricity connection to the informal areas in Freetown is upgrading. Also police, health services are provided in these areas in Freetown. Therefore, we could say take services to communities and bring people on board.

- Women taking position of leadership within key urban development stakeholders is fundamental to support wider processes of gender equality. Unlike Freetown, among the institutions visited, women have achieved position of leadership in Cape Town. This is against the background that the Sierra Leone constitution provides for 30% quota for women in leadership positions. However, stronger efforts should be made to change institutional practices, remove barriers impeding the career progression of women and to build capacities of women to play leadership role in urban development processes.

These learnings could be categorized into 3 themes;

1. Empowering partnerships and collaborations
2. Upgrading and its diverse forms
3. Gender and development.

Together with participants from all the organizations that were engaged during the exchange (Isandla Institute, City of Cape Town, Development Action Group (DAG), Africa Centre for Cities (ACC), Slum Dwellers International (SDI), Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPPU), the identified thematic learnings were further discussed to identify synergies, similarities, and differences between Cape Town and Freetown.

**4. Conclusion.** The lessons from this exchange have contributed to strengthening collaboration between the PSCP partnership and the Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) and the Freetown Eastern Slum Dwellers Association (FESDA) in their partnership and advocacy initiatives to influence urban development policy and practice in Sierra Leone.

Participants from Government institutions and the Freetown City Council have also learnt a lot on upgrading and partnerships with communities and NGOs. With a vision for the participants of this exchange to form the core of a Freetown Development Forum, the media participant at the exchange will be very useful in the advocacy that is envisaged in operationalizing the forum towards policy impact.

## Formal And Informal Synergies For A Prosperous Freetown

Braima Koroma, Co-Director, SLURC

The key aspiration of the Government of Sierra Leone, as articulated in the Agenda for Prosperity (2012-2018), is to transform Sierra Leone into a middle income country by 2035. One of the challenges government has been grappling with over recent years is how to create productive, inclusive and resilient cities, as outlined in the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goal 11. To achieve this, there is need to promote urban economic transformation, and enhance productive, healthy, peaceful and resilient cities that are well-adapted to accommodate

growing population through the creation of employment opportunities.

Moreover, the need to recognize the links between the informal and formal economy including the contribution it makes to the overall functioning of the economy is critical. Therefore, supporting the working poor, especially women in the informal economy is important for reducing poverty and gender inequality. Furthermore, reforming the formal sector to create a synergy with the informal sector will

effectively utilize and strengthen the linkages between the two sectors. This is key to achieving inclusive and sustainable long-term urban development.

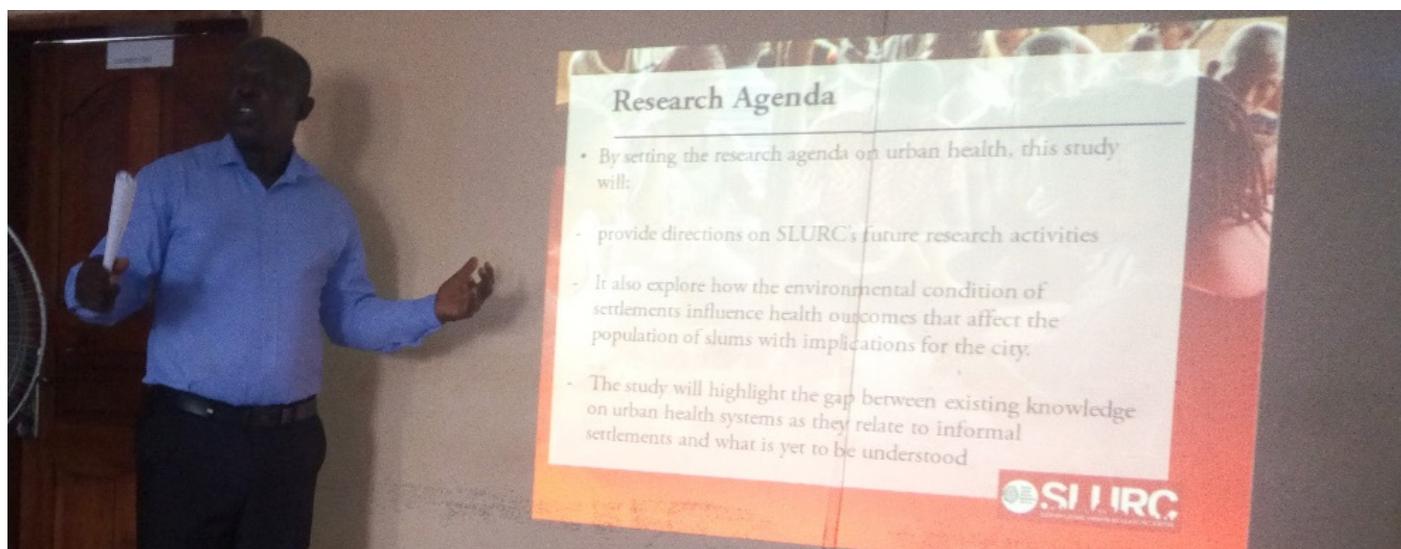
The resourcefulness of the informal sector must be used if the city is to move towards a more prosperous, inclusive and environmentally sustainable urban society. The informal sector economy which has the capacity to sustain its workers should be used as a development driver rather than being weeded out. It should therefore be monitored and promoted to enhance its contribution to the real GDP of the country. This implies a system that incrementally regulate and support it, to maximize its employment and economic benefits, as well as avoid the costs that can be linked to informality, such as unprotected working conditions and damage to the urban environment.

A synergy in tandem with economic theory is that irrespective of which individual or business is part of the informal economy, they are still aware of market forces, both within that economy and at the interface with the organisations, institutions and individuals that are part of the formal economy. Although many of the transactions within the informal economy may not be within the purview of official statistics or known to the tax authorities, they are still subject to the market rules that determine prices of goods and services in the economy as a whole. Many people in Freetown have precarious and insecure working situations, and so many of them combine formal and informal work in order to secure enough income. In broad terms, the bigger the difference between the total cost of labour in the formal (or official) economy and after-tax earnings from formal economy work, the greater the incentive for employers and employees to avoid this gap by participating in the informal economy. Individual workers will be mobile between the formal and the informal economy depending on the level of net wages. If net wages fall they will work more in the informal economy and vice versa.

Key to an effective policy approach is to first recognize that both sectors incorporate creativity, entrepreneurial

flair and a general desire to harness the human capital in ways that maximizes its potential. It will suffice for a start to identify some general policies with details and priorities that will depend on the aims and objectives of the city of Freetown or the scale and contribution of the informal economy to economic growth. More important is the need for sustained political commitment in the city to devise the most appropriate strategies and policies to maximize the synergies between the formal and the informal economies.

To initiate a dialogue on the process of building this synergy SLURC organized a conference to enable broader discussions and debates around the need for building synergies between formal and informal sector towards a prosperous city economy. The one-day conference which was organized by the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) in collaboration with Njala University (NU), The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (University College London-UCL), Young Men Christian Association (YMCA-SL), Restless Development, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC SL) and Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlements and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA). It was held at the Golden Tulip Hotel (Essential Kimbima), Freetown on 23rd August 2017. The purpose of the conference therefore was to start policy dialogue, debates and engagement process for inclusive urban planning process. It brought together academics, central government, local authorities, communities, politicians, informal sector workers and NGOs to discuss what and how the livelihoods of informal sector residents are linked to the formal sector and also how it contribute to a prosperous city economy. This has created a platform for SLURC and her partners to network with a range of urban actors and stakeholders, particularly policy makers and academics, to send key messages on the importance of informal livelihoods and the risk to displacement. The conference also discussed evidence-based informal livelihoods analysis to enhance participants' understanding on how to transform the informal economy and generate prosperity for all by working more collaboratively with people living in informal settlements and working in the informal and formal sectors of the city economy.



Dr. Macarthy presenting SLURC'S urban health research agenda

## SLURC Validates Scoping Study On Urban Health In Sierra Leone

Abu Conteh - Urban Health Research Assistant, SLURC

On 29th November 2017, Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) held a one day workshop to highlight some of the challenges, threats and drivers of health risks in urban Sierra Leone. The workshop brought together stakeholders drawn from central government ministries and agencies, the Freetown City Council, health NGOs, CBOs and community federations to discuss pertinent issues from the on-going scoping study report and to identifying what needs to be prioritized for SLURC's Future Health Systems (FHS) research agenda on urban health.

### The need for reliable health data

In his presentation, Dr. Joseph Macarthy pointed out that urban health risk factors in Sierra Leone are complicated by the unavailability of reliable data to guide policy decisions and programmatic interventions, needed especially in informal settlements where such problems abound. He noted that health data generated by the national agency (Statistics Sierra Leone) is often not disaggregated to reflect the circumstances in informal settlements. As a result, evidence on urban health not only presents a blurred understanding of the kinds of issues to pursue, but also influences the desired outcomes in health interventions.

For these reasons, SLURC, is carrying out a scoping study that will:

- Explore how the living conditions and other structural forces (framings and public narratives that influence policies) at the city level affect health outcomes for informal settlement dwellers
- Identify existing knowledge gaps in urban health in Sierra Leone
- Appraise the methodologies used in the studies and identify what else needs to be understood both to address the health risks and to improve the health conditions of informal settlement dwellers in urban Sierra Leone.

Dr. Macarthy noted that one key purpose that the scoping study will be to provide useful information to inform the design by government agencies and relevant NGOs of planned health interventions they wish to undertake, especially in informal settlements.

SLURC Health expert, Mr. Babawo outlined some of the key preliminary findings of the study for discussion:

- Women and children are at the heart of all urban health problems
- Unsurprisingly, most of the health risks are located in Freetown, compared to other urban areas in Sierra Leone
- Freetown's high health risks cannot be unconnected to

the high rate of urbanization, the rise in population and the associated sprawling leading to the proliferation of unplanned settlement development both in the center and on the fringes of the city.

- Other factors relate to the rise in air pollution, increased community exposures to flood and health disaster risks, and the limited access to health services, especially for vulnerable and low-income earners living in informal settlements.

### Identifying the knowledge gaps

While noting the important role that data can play in informing the design of sound policies and programmes, it was recognized that unless active actions are taken to fill the existing knowledge gaps in the identified areas, it will be difficult to improve the wellbeing of much of the poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups living in informal settlements.

The participants at the workshop took part in group work to identify some of the key issues that had received insufficient attention in the past, with a view to prioritizing them in SLURC's upcoming study. These included:

- Malaria prevention, nutritional support, and increased health access for women and children
- Community health education/awareness
- Capacity of health workers for improved health service delivery
- The health effects of improper waste management and poor sanitation
- Procurement and the supply of drugs to health facilities



Participant presenting thought from group discussions

- Health policies and adequacy to address current and emerging health needs
- Flooding and the health effects of poor drainage systems on informal settlements
- The role of sanitation and good hygiene practices to avoid the spread of diseases
- What makes specific categories of people in informal settlements more vulnerable to epidemic diseases (e.g. cholera and diarrhea) than others?
- Why the high preference for Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) over trained health professionals in informal settlements?

The participants also described how whilst there were a high number of health organizations working in informal settlements in Freetown, overall the outputs seem low and have minimal impact on the communities. This was put down to the uncoordinated response by organisations and a duplication of efforts because interventions are rarely guided by evidence-based knowledge.

### What should SLURC prioritise?

For that reason, the participants emphasised the need for SLURC to intensify its effort in providing these organisations with current, accurate and reliable data and health knowledge to guide their interventions. With regards to urban health, the added research issues identified for SLURC to prioritise in the short and medium term included:

- Why the high prevalence of maternal and child mortality in informal communities?
- The impact of Sexual and Reproductive Health services on teenage pregnancy levels in Freetown
- Impact of poor housing conditions on health outcomes in informal settlements

The workshop proved to be an extremely useful and engaging event which enabled SLURC to not only present its research findings but to also gather crucial input from a group of informed stakeholders about what other health issues need to be explored in its work. These discussions will now be combined with the earlier findings to provide not only a clear understanding of the baseline situation on urban health knowledge but will also help to define the future research priority areas for SLURC.

## How can neighborhood planning bring about inclusive city-making?

Ibrahim Bun Kamara; Project Manager, SLURC

Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) with The Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London and Architecture Sans Frontières – United Kingdom (ASF-UK) held a one week workshop (28 August - 3 September 2017) that shared an innovative research methodology on how communities together with their support institutions can develop neighbourhood plans in ways that can help them in securing rights to the city.

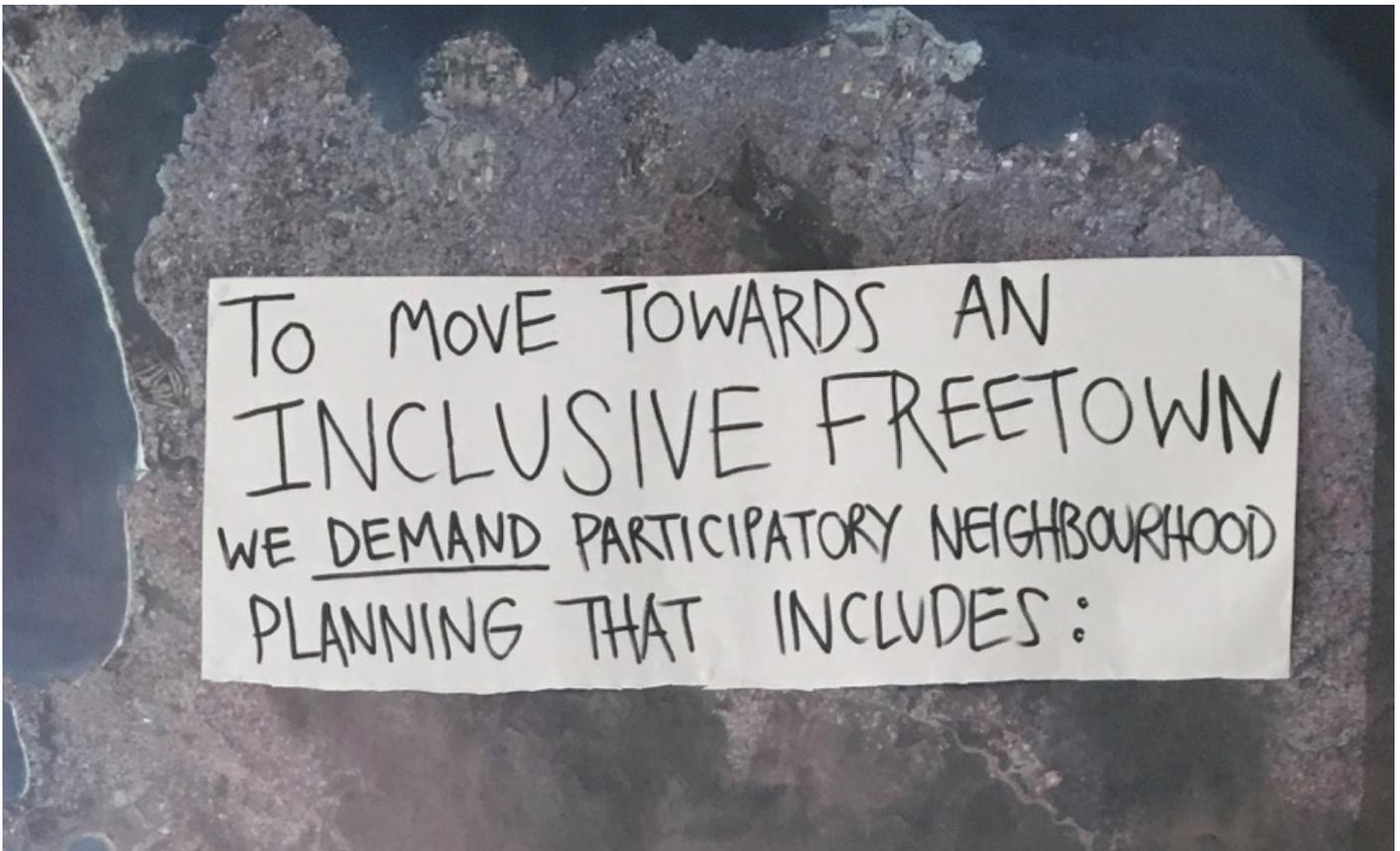
The workshop was structured using the ASF-UK Change by Design Methodology which uses urban design and planning skills to support community groups in developing plans and strategies that foster the production of more just cities. The programme unites a series of workshops and events that explore participatory and co design methods to empower communities to influence change in their neighbourhoods. In other words, Change by Design explores participatory design and planning as tools for advancing social justice and improving democratic decision-making in processes of urban change. Through its commitment to action learning and knowledge co-production, approach uses urban design and planning skills to contribute to the empowerment of urban marginalized groups and communities.

The course involved stages and spatial levels of analysis. The stages included Diagnosis, Dreaming, Developing and Defining. The analysis of the stages was then carried out at the spatial levels of Home / Dwelling, Neighbourhood and City.

**Dwelling/Home Scale** analysis involved understanding current housing conditions looking at physical, social and economic dimensions of home, exploring what type of home that residents want to live in, and discusses challenges and opportunities to bring about changes in home conditions that reflect residents

**Aspirations.** This group therefore looked at housing needs as well as aspirations of local residents. They discussed around the questions of; what are the main challenges that residents from Cockle Bay face to have a secure home? And what are the most important things that people would like to see change in relation to their current housing condition?

**Neighbourhood Scale** discussions were geared towards understanding the current conditions of shared spaces and physical infrastructure as well as who has access to them. They group also explored ideas for inclusive neighbourhood spaces that reflect community/residents collective values and aspirations. Furthermore, they discussed the challenges and opportunities to bring about change in the neighbourhood. Specifically, this group looked at the community resources in Cockle Bay as well as their needs in relation to services and facilities in the neighbourhood such as water, sanitation, education, health, etc. They discussed questions like what are the things that people would like to keep and change in their community.



**City Scale** overview was aimed at understanding how city wide dynamics affect the neighbourhood and its residents. It explored ideas for a more inclusive city that reflects the residents' aspirations as well as the challenges and opportunities to bring about city wide change. In particular, this group explored the issues that need to change at the city-wide level to improve the quality of life of those living in Cockle Bay. This included discussing issues around transport and livelihoods, as well as the relationship between community groups and city stakeholders such as Freetown City Council, private developers, and NGOs.

**Policy and Planning** aspects of the framework provided an understanding of the institutional context, identified policies and regulations that might support the provision of inclusive neighbourhoods and community led planning. Also explored the opportunities for citizen participation in city making.

Due to the multistage and levels of analysis embedded within this participatory approach, the workshop participants were classified into 2 types.

**Type 1: Full workshop participants:** These were a group of 25 participants drawn from government, Freetown municipality, NGOs and communities. They were part of all activities of the workshop. This implied that they attended the sessions at SLURC, prepared methodologies, conducted field visits, process information, prepare and deliver final presentations. As the core group of participants, this was meant to enable them understand the neighbourhood planning process and how participatory tools can be adapted to understand and communicate

the needs and aspirations of communities in Freetown.

**Type 2: Field-work participants:** These were members of Cockle Bay or other key informants that participated in the field activities for three consecutive afternoons. They were therefore exposed to participatory planning methodologies, and received certificates of participation in the workshop. They were also made to attend the final presentation on at the end of the workshop. This was meant to enable this group to understand how communities can mobilize and engage in processes of neighbourhood planning in the city.

Furthermore, both types of participants were divided into the three working groups (home, neighbourhood and City).

It is also worth noting that the workshop was implemented in partnership with the Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP), so that the lessons learned from this experience can feed into their on-going activities of settlement profiling in Freetown. FEDURP mobilized the field work participants in three groups of 15 participants per working group. These groups participated for the three consecutive field work activities and also attended the final presentation on the last day of the workshop.

It is the hope of SLURC that this initiative can be a pilot experience to a longer and deeper action research project that will be led by SLURC on neighbourhood planning in Freetown. The workshop ended with a manifesto jointly developed by all participants as the final event. (See picture below) For more information on this initiative, see video: <https://youtu.be/5Bg2Kf0WzWE>



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Dissemination Of Research Outputs

**1. Exploring the role of empowerment in urban humanitarian responses in Freetown.** Published by IIED in London, the working paper looks at humanitarian responses in the Portee-Rokupa neighborhood of Freetown. By focusing on the empowerment implication of humanitarian responses, it explores the extent to which approaches have been able to build the capacities of informal dwellers' groups, foster collaboration among different stakeholders, enable critical learning, and open up opportunities for the recognition of the diverse needs and aspirations of vulnerable groups within the wider policy and planning environment. From its findings, it concluded with a series of recommendations for the national and international humanitarian sector, which fundamentally calls for a reframe of the role of community participation in urban humanitarian response. A copy of the report can be accessed at [www.slurc.org](http://www.slurc.org).

**2. Urban Livelihoods in Freetown's Informal Settlements.** As its first flagship project, SLURC has undertaken a study on urban livelihoods in four informal settlements across Freetown. This research was an attempt to develop a more detailed understanding of the existing livelihood strategies of women and men living in informal settlements so as to inform policy and programmatic interventions. The study concluded that livelihoods of informal settlement dwellers provide for the well-being of large numbers of people, with little capital, while contributing to key sectors of the city. They are based on trust relationships built over long periods of time and informal institutions which regulate the sector. There may be a need to manage these systems to support spatial planning, environmental sustainability and economic activities. However, any resulting disruptions will affect the supply of key goods and services to the city and cut the livelihoods of a large number of people. Therefore similar labour intensive alternatives need to be developed BEFORE any interventions.

**3. A Scoping Study on Urban Health Situation in Sierra Leone** which seeks to provide vital information with clear insight into the current state of knowledge on urban health systems in Sierra Leone has recently been produced. The study identifies and analyses existing literature on urban health in terms of specific knowledge gaps regarding urban informal settlements and proposes a research agenda for SLURC's involvement in the Future Health Systems (FHS) research led by John Hopkins University and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex. Some key findings of the study are that research on urban health in Sierra Leone is limited. The few available documents have tended to focus more on issues

relating to women, children, youths, and the disabled. The issues have most been discussed in the context of epidemics and urban health emergencies. However, barriers to health services (cultural, economic etc.) are seen as the main health risk faced by most urban informal settlement dwellers in the country.

### Action Research And Training Activities

**1. The Research on "The Role of Action Area Plans for Inclusive City-Making in Freetown"** will build upon the neighbourhood planning and design training activity conducted in September 2017. Working through partnership with a range of actors, the research will investigate the issues that are important to local communities as well as link such concerns to policy making for actions that will produce positive change to the communities. Moreover, because land use planning in Freetown is mostly limited to formal areas thereby ignoring the informal settlements where a significant proportion of the population live, the study will provide authorities with a holistic understanding of the city especially in terms of the current and future needs of the local communities with a focus on sustainability and inclusive development. The research will seek to also inform planning policies especially for improving areas where significant development is expected. This research will commence with a methodology training workshop scheduled for the last week of January 2018.

**2. Innovative research methods training workshop – Action learning course on Pro Poor Land Rights and Informality.** As part of a larger neighbourhood planning programme with two informal settlements in Freetown, SLURC will be delivering a participatory action learning course on Pro Poor Land Rights and Informality in Freetown on the 19-23 February 2018. The aim of the course is to strengthen the capacity of the SLURC's partners including local and national government and civil society stakeholders and community leaders to implement a programme of pro poor land rights in two informal settlements in Freetown. The course will focus specifically on the processes and procedures in designing and implementing community land administration – based upon a continuum of land rights with principles that include affordability, inclusiveness, participatory and pro poor. The course will use a mix of participatory action learning methodologies, including field work as well as lectures. Participants will be encouraged to learn through action, including testing tools and methodologies. The course will be facilitated by two international professionals from the Development Action Group (DAG) in Cape Town, South Africa. A training pack will be provided to all participants at the end of the course. You may express your interest by contacting us using the details in this publication.

