Planning Freetown’s Informal Settlements
The case for Community Action Area Plans (CAAP)

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Structure of Presentation

- Why Community Action Area Plans (CAAP)?
  - Key Challenges for Planning in Freetown
  - Legal and Policy Context
- Methodology
- Key Findings
- Potentials of CAAP
Key Challenges for Planning in Freetown

- Rapid population increase with urban primacy as a key feature
- Inadequate access to secure land for housing
- Pressure for housing with poor and insanitary conditions
- Unplanned growth
- Poor and inadequate services
- Sprawling and the explosion of slums with 35% of all residents in Freetown living in overcrowded & under-serviced slums
- Severe shortage in knowledge about the conditions in which people live
- Lack of capacity of the different stakeholder dealing with the urban challenge
Policy and Planning

- Town & Country Planning Act (1946): too old fashioned to guide orderly use of land

- Freetown Improvement Act & Rules, Cap 66 (1960) provides technical rules to guide housing development in the city


- Freetown Structure Plan (2014): proposes a range of actions to enable Freetown capably deal with its rapid and uncontrolled growth process.

- Spatial Development Strategy: provides a framework for the spatial transformation of Sierra Leone
- Strengthening Land-Use Planning in Local Councils: a supplementary document to the FSP that provides planning guidelines for e.g. Action Area Plans (AAP)

- AAP should:
  • Set out the strategic vision for a place
  • Provide the framework for actions to address the local challenges and priorities of people relating to their current and future development aspirations

- Transform Freetown Agenda

- National Development Plan (2019-2023): recognises urban and informal settlements but with no clear plans to deal with the issues
Focuses on current planning policies and fulfilling policy conditions whilst recognising international policy obligations e.g. New Urban Agenda. Examines existing public participation mechanisms in planning, and creating spaces to improve these and make the process more inclusive.

- Also assesses policies relating to informal settlements and their role in shaping spatial development plans and action area plans for the city.
CAAP used the ASF-UK Change by Design (CbD) methodology: an evolving, action research-led methodology consisting of a series of workshops and seminars examining socio-spatial urban dynamics. It uses participatory design and planning to support and advocate for more democratic forms of city making.

The methodology is structured around four scales:
Focuses on housing conditions and experiences, including physical (spatial layout and use, materials) and intangible aspects (daily routine, support networks, power dynamics, tenure arrangements and service provision)
Community scale

Focuses on community dynamics in relation to community spaces (streets, public and communal spaces), social systems and physical infrastructure (transport, water and sanitation, energy etc.)

Diagnosis  Dreaming  Developing  Defining
City scale

- Focuses on urban processes, conditions and experiences. Reflects how these affect community residents and how city wide actions can meet their needs and aspirations.

- Includes issues affecting distribution of risk and opportunities in the city, e.g. patterns of urban growth, access to infrastructure and the city economy.
Integrated principles and options

Consolidating the principles & options across each scale

For example:

Access for all to quality, safe housing which works for different family types in the community

Improve access and mobility within the community and with surrounding area
Portfolio of options

- Negotiation between different interests, balancing priorities in relation to the principles
- Leading to settlement design guide
What is the role of the CAAP in expanding the capabilities of informal settlement dwellers to participate in city-making processes?
Methods

CAAP Process
154 people

Research Process
145 people

21 focus group activities
83 semi-structured interviews
Participatory Aspirations

Critical Capacity Development
Participatory Aspirations

Critical Capacity Development

Empowering Relationship Building
Participatory Aspirations

“We expect that CAAP process to connect us (our community) with the day-to-day activities of government and hence, help to secure for us a guarantee to continue living here without any further threat of eviction”

FEDURP Representative
Participatory Aspirations

Critical Capacity Development

Empowering Relationship Building

Inclusive and Responsive Action
Participatory Aspirations

We want to understand the current situation in the communities and to identify what changes and improvements are really needed in such places.

FCC Representative

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FCC Representative

Critical Capacity Development
Empowering Relationship Building
Inclusive and Responsive Action
Participatory Aspirations

Critical Capacity Development

Empowering Relationship Building

Inclusive and Responsive Action
“The process has helped us to understand some of the disaster risks faced in our community and how planning can help us deal with it. It also helped us to identify the shared spaces in our community, define their current uses (...) and agree on ways to preserve them.”

Community representative from Dwarzack:
“The process has helped us to understand some of the disaster risks faced in our community and how planning can help us deal with it. It also helped us to identify the shared spaces in our community, define their current uses (...) and agree on ways to preserve them.”

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Participatory Assets

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Human Assets

Social Assets

Political Assets

“The CAAP process has created opportunities for us to build relationships with the city authorities. It has helped us to be included in the city’s decision making processes.” CBO member from Dwarzack
Participatory Assets

“The process has helped us to understand some of the disaster risks faced in our community and how planning can help us deal with it. It also helped us to identify the shared spaces in our community, define their current uses (...) and agree on ways to preserve them.”
Community representative from Dwarzack:

“The CAAP process has created opportunities for us to build relationships with the city authorities. It has helped us to be included in the city’s decision making processes.”
CBO member from Dwarzack
“We argued a lot and also disagreed a lot but at the end of the day we were able to come up with solid solutions... that brought out the best in us and also helped those who initially lagged behind” CAAP participant
Participatory Opportunities

1. CAAP enabling planning literacy

2. CAAP helping planning to move sideways

3. CAAP helping planning to move downwards as well as upwards
Potential of the CAAP

- While the CAAP can be applied in any community at the local level, this study focuses on informal settlements. The CAAP describes how rapidly growing communities on insecure land and with limited services can be organised to explore practical and durable solutions to some of the development challenges faced.

- A recognition that while conventional forms of planning are the norm, such approaches do not always meet the needs of the majority of the urban poor who mostly live in informal settlements.

- The CAAP process is designed such that the very people who will be affected by the plan are actively involved in the plan preparation process.
Potential of the CAAP

- The CAAP highlights that local residents are creative agents and are therefore, central to their own development.

- The CAAP is a useful means to outline the development priorities and aspirations of communities and the residents.

- The CAAP can help city authorities to promote social and economic transformation in the communities and thereby, reduce poverty and inequality.

- The CAAP supports existing guidelines for preparing Action Area Plans by

- The CAAP provide an inclusive way to identify current and future development priorities and aspirations of the people.
Potential of the CAAP

- The CAAP can be applied in any community at the local level (including informal settlements).

- Shows how to organise rapidly growing communities on insecure land and with limited services to bring about practical and durable solutions to some of the development deficits in their areas.

- Unlike the CAAP, conventional forms of planning do not always meet the needs of the majority of the urban poor who mostly live in informal settlements.

- The CAAP process allows the very people who will be affected by the problem to be actively involved in the plan preparation process.
Potential of the CAAP

- The CAAP highlights the creativity of the local residents in bringing about solutions to the problems in their community.

- The CAAP is a useful means to outline the development priorities and aspirations of communities and the residents.

- The CAAP helps city authorities to decide on the kinds of social and economic transformations to carry out in the communities and thereby, reduce poverty and inequality.

- The CAAP supports existing guidelines for preparing Action Area Plans by

- The CAAP provide an inclusive way to identify current and future development priorities and aspirations of the people.
Potential of the CAAP

- The CAAP ensures that development is carried out in a sustainable and integrated manner.

- The CAAP sets out guidelines/ key principles to follow in bringing about sustainable, phased and managed development of a particular area.

- Set out the development priorities and objectives for each action area.

- The KNOW project enriching the CAAP with:
  
  • Community profiling
  • City learning platform
Any questions?

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