

SLURC

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Supporting Informal Settlements during COVID-19: Lessons from the Ebola outbreak in Freetown

Dr. Joseph Macarthy

Informal settlements are at the heart of health inequalities, particularly evident during pandemics such as COVID-19. Due to their characteristics: without access to reliable and essential urban services such as water, health care, sanitation and electricity, disease can spread more rapidly, crippling the lives and livelihoods of its inhabitants.

The 2014 Ebola outbreak did not only highlight the need to focus responses on urban areas but recognized the need for these responses to be tailored to the constraints informal settlements face in health emergencies. Now, with the rapid development of COVID-19 in Sierra Leone, this discussion has become more pertinent than ever. Understanding, what the state of the health system is in urban Sierra Leone, what specific conditions make urban informal settlements at risk to disease outbreaks and what considerations need to be taken to limit the incidence of disease outbreaks will ultimately help provide insight into how the COVID-19 response should be tailored to informal settlements.

In the short run, with cases being reported in informal settlements in Freetown, answering these questions will help ensure that the health security needs of informal dwellers are addressed. In the long run, this challenge of rapid urbanization and the increase in health epidemics is exerting enormous pressure on city authorities to provide more land for housing, essential urban services and address the complex factors which underpin the vulnerability of informal settlements. A full brief on this discussion will be published on www.slurg.org/policy-briefs.html



Military walking through informal settlement. Image: Andrea Klingel, SLURC

Urban Mobility-Based Approach to Improving Settlements in African Cities

Yasmina Yusuf

In March, SLURC conducted data collection in Moyiba as part of an urban mobility project, funded by Osaka University's International Joint Research Programme under the Global Knowledge Partners framework. SLURC is the implementing partner in Freetown, where together with two PhD students from Ghana (Tracy Commodore and Louis Kusi), an objective and subjective mapping of the informal settlement was conducted to assess the accessibility of Moyiba and potential entry points for enhancing mobility within the informal settlement. The partnership is part of a larger bilateral exchange between UCL and Osaka University. It seeks to expand conceptual and methodological approaches to the study and improvement of urban mobility in informal settlements in African cities.

The research, which is currently being analysed, provided some interesting insights into the challenges and opportunities of accessibility and mobility in Moyiba. Furthermore, a map of the informal settlement depicting all main roads and pathways is being developed and will be shared with the community, so it can be used for future interventions. The project is led by the Urban Development Planning Lab of the Graduate School of Engineering in Osaka University and the Development Planning Unit at UCL.



SLURC conducting data collection in Moyiba. Image: Louis Kusi



SLURC and FEDURP data collectors. Image: Yasmina Yusuf, UCL/SLURC

T-SUM Stakeholder Engagement Workshops

Yasmina Yusuf



T-SUM stakeholder engagement workshop. Image: Dr Clemence Cavioli, UCL

In December 2019, the Transition to Sustainable Urban Mobility (T-SUM) project hosted a two-day workshop entitled 'Future Freetown: A vision to Improve Mobility' which took place at the Radisson Blu Hotel. This was followed by a workshop in March 2020 that initiated evidence-based engagement with key professional stakeholders across sectors and the public, to foster innovative models of urban development based on a sustainable mobility trajectory.

T-SUM focuses on the co-production of knowledge between local and international partners in academia, government and the third sector to generate a conceptual framework, evidence base and practice experiences for accelerating sustainable and inclusive mobility development trajectories in Sub-Saharan African cities.

The first workshop kick-started this co-production and served as an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to get together and discuss & complement the visioning exercise for urban mobility & land-use that took place during Transform Freetown. This workshop concluded by identifying urban trajectories in Freetown, including relevant policy instruments.

The second workshop set to establish a roadmap for the implementation of these policy instruments, by identifying the constraints and opportunities. This resulted in an agreed list of potential urban trajectories.

Freetown, which is used as a case study, is concurrently facing the twin challenge of integrating the built and social fabric alongside attaining lasting and inclusive economic growth. The project has therefore focused on analysing dynamics at the city level with the development of a city profile for Freetown from the perspective of urban mobility and the analysis of four specific case studies (Cline Town, Moyiba, South Ridge and Brookfields) with different levels of car use and accessibility.

T-SUM is an interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborative research project that aims to identify the conditions under which pathways to sustainable and inclusive transport and land use development can be accelerated in growing cities in the Global South. It has three core objectives, which are

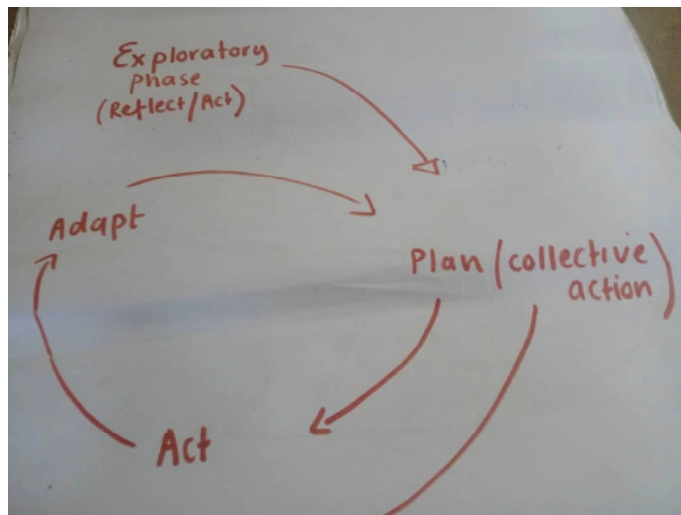
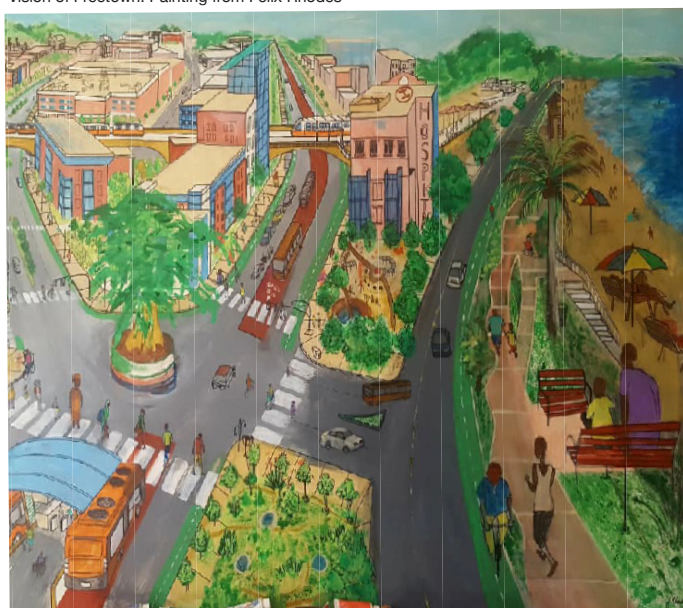
1. To develop a conceptual framework based on alternative development trajectories for (un)sustainable urban transport, drawing on data from cities across the Global North and the Global South;
2. To assemble and co-produce evidence by interrogating urban transport and land use data in two rapidly developing cities in the region, Maputo (Mozambique) and Freetown;
3. To initiate participative governance processes to foster new models of development based on a sustainable mobility trajectory, through evidence-based engagement with public and professional stakeholders across levels of governance and sectors.

The programme, which is led by the UCL Centre of Transport Studies and the Bartlett Development Planning Unit in partnership with SLURC, is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council.

For more information visit the T-SUM website: <https://www.t-sum.org>



Vision of Freetown. Painting from Felix Rhodes



A diagram showing how the exploratory work will transition through participatory phases
Image: Abu Conteh, SLURC

ARISE Exploratory Data Collection put on Hold in Freetown

Abu Conteh and Mary S. Kamara

SLURC together with its consortium partners in the Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity (ARISE) project had to put the data collection for the exploratory phase of the project in Freetown on hold. The decision was made to adhere to current restrictions from the government which promote social distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Working in informal settlements is particularly precarious given their overcrowded nature and limited spaces for social distancing. Prior to recording the first case of COVID-19 on the 30th March 2020, the ARISE consortium, which consists of a clinician, pharmacists and public health specialists designed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to promote sanitation, hand washing, and social distancing during data collection. The idea was to protect researchers, co-researchers and participants from infection. However, following the first confirmed case, the planned data collection for social mapping, which was to be followed by a wealth ranking, governance mapping and interviews have been put on hold.

The ARISE research project is targeting Dworzark, Moyiba and Cockle Bay communities, all of which have similar slum-like characteristics. Despite their similarities, these communities differ in some ways including topography, priorities, livelihood aspirations and risks. The five-year project collaboration between Sierra Leone partners and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) aims at using accountability as a core strategy to raise the voices of the urban poor to attain health equity.

In the initial stages of the project, SLURC and its partners; LSTM, College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS), Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOSAPA) and the Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) held a three-day meeting at the College of Medicine in Freetown to finalize an ethics protocol and discuss how each of the research methods will explore the needs and priorities of



A Cross section of participants and facilitators during a visit to Dworzark Image: Abu Conteh, SLURC

community residents. Discussions at the meeting focused on the alignment of research methods, research tools and objectives.

The meeting also brought together community representatives to promote an understanding of the participatory research process itself and discuss how the novel concept of co-research will be piloted into health systems research in Sierra Leone. Various sessions at the meeting explored practical ways to work with co-researchers without compromising research ethics and building their capacity. The six-month exploratory work will use a range of participatory tools including social and governance mapping, group model building, and wealth ranking.

A key innovation in the exploratory work is the piloting of the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) which brings on board community members as co-researchers who will participate in the core research process and then plan collective actions together with city and national authorities to improve health in their communities. The co-researchers will be working alongside consortium researchers from SLURC, COMAHS, CODOHSAPA and FEDURP to explore social and governance dynamics within communities and link them to health.

In January 2020 a four-day training on the CBPR model for co-researchers was organized, which generated discussions on practical ways to implement the various participatory research tools by co-researchers.

One of the dilemmas is for co-researchers to maintain a balance between being a community member and a researcher. However, the research ethics they have been trained on will help them strike this balance. The training event itself was followed by a field visit to Dworzark community where the team met with the chief and other community elders, community youths, women and other groups. to inform them about the ARISE project and how it intends to work with communities to identify the health and wellbeing challenges and solutions for its inhabitants. Community residents were supportive of the project because of its participatory approaches in addressing health challenges.

For more information see the ARISE website: <http://www.ariseconsortium.org>



Training of co-researchers. Image: Abu Conteh, SLURC

SLURC participates in the ARUA international conference in Nairobi 18th – 20th November 2019

Braima Koroma

The African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) Second Biennial Conference 2019 themed “Africa and the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Defining a Role for Research Universities” was hosted by the University of Nairobi and sponsored by United Kingdom Research and Innovation in collaboration with the Carnegie Corporations of New York, South Africa’s National Research Foundation and US-Based Clarivate Analysis between 18 – 20 November 2019. The conference brought together over 300 delegates including top management from African universities, international expertise from academia, policy makers and researchers, government, industry, as well as civil society members from around the world, to share knowledge and ideas on the role of African Universities in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The conference was framed to provide answers to the following questions: How should universities prepare the student for the digital future? What research will support the production of goods and services in Africa in the new digital age? What relevant research will generate answers to questions about how to deal with the fall-out from the new revolution? For example, what should drive regulation of human ingenuity and what kind of social charter the world should accept going forward, bringing into question the place of global organisations such as the UN in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

SLURC, as part of the network of the ARUA Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Urbanization and Habitable Cities, participated in a capacity building workshop on “City Infrastructure in Africa: Demand and Supply” on the 20th of November 2019. As part of the workshop, the CoE invited Professor Matthew Siemiatycy (University of Toronto, Canada) as keynote speaker to present on the topic ‘imperatives for infrastructure in African cities’. This was followed by panel discussion chaired by Dr Taibat Lawanson, allowing a rich debate with several actors, including Professor Astrid Haas (International Growth Centre, UK), Dr. Idris O Salako (Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Lagos, Nigeria), and Dr. Femi Adewole (Family Homes Funds, Abuja, Nigeria) on the role of infrastructure required for functionality in African cities and the method of supplying them, offering their knowledge and experiences of best practices in infrastructure provision, funding and management. This was followed by working groups to explore the single most compelling infrastructure need in participant cities and what the priority research theme should be that can support collaboration to find solutions to Africa’s development problems. The members of the network (roughly ten universities/research institutions) identified transport and mobility as a priority research agenda to address the salient and often intractable problems associated with the urbanisation of African cities.

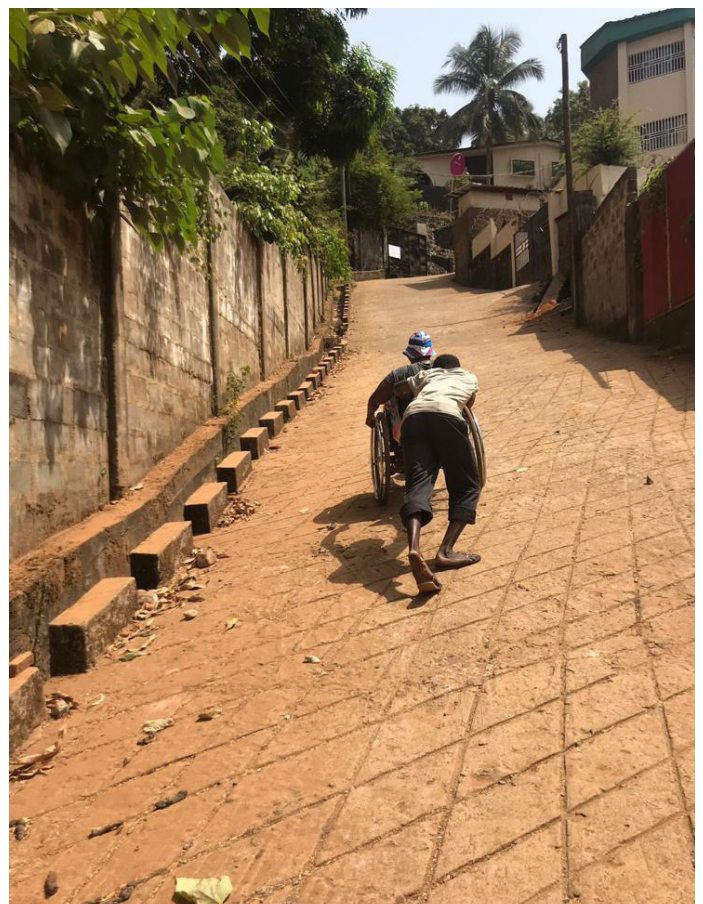
Experiencing public transportation in the city: T-SUM’s mobility exercise

Yasmina Yusuf

As part of the second workshop outlined on page 2 of the newsletter, T-SUM conducted a Shared Mobility Experience Exercise, which involved the Steering Committee of the project taking different modes of transportation across Freetown. The objective of this exercise was to experience the day-to-day challenges of mobility and transport in the city (including walking), which fed into the roundtable discussions of the workshop on the 4th March 2020 and ultimately informed the practical policy recommendations coming out of this second T-SUM workshop.



Mobility Exercise Team Image: Yasmina Yusuf, UCL/SLURC



An example of a mobility & accessibility challenge for persons with disabilities. Image: Ing. Cherner Jalloh, FBC

Insight from the World Congress of United Cities for Local and Regional Government in Durban, South Africa

Braima Koroma

In November 2019, SLURC took part in the United Cities for Local and Regional Government in Durban, South Africa. Themed around the slogan 'Cities Are Listening', this gathering of Mayors and other cities urban practitioners was focused on the role of cities in localising the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The SLURC delegation included Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, Mayor of Freetown, Fatmata Shour, Poet and Actress, and Braima Koroma, Director of Research and Training, SLURC.

The delegation participated in the session on 'Partnership for Urban Equality'. The panel was coordinated and supported by UCL's Development Planning Unit and Melbourne University's Connected Cities Lab as part of the KNOW project. The aim of the session was to delineate a set of key principles which support the establishment of a community of practice on urban equality; and to identify key windows of opportunity for 2020 to enhance the global attention to the core role of equality in city action and innovation.

During the panel discussion, the Mayor of Freetown shared lessons and experiences on how to engage in partnerships with knowledge institutions such as SLURC and other urban stakeholders as a way of localising the SDG agenda. She provided insight into how partnerships with relevant stakeholders had helped in the formulation and development of the 'Transform Freetown Initiative' that is currently driving the processes of urban transformation.

In order to discuss collectively which principles should underpin partnerships for urban equality, there were two parallel working groups led by research partners from Freetown and Havana. In the Freetown group, SLURC examined the importance of partnerships through its work. This involved the setting up of 'Community Learning Platforms' and a 'City Learning Platforms'. These learning platforms were established specifically to build partnerships to better address urban challenges impacting informal settlement residents, in a participatory and sustained manner. They contribute meaningfully to the 'Transform Freetown' initiative championed by the Mayor of Freetown, as well as the Medium-Term National Development Plan of Sierra Leone.

The final session allowed the plenary of government officials and other actors, to reflect on their perspectives of their own cities. The session ended with a poem written by the Sierra Leonian poet and actress Fatmata Shour titled 'Living in a slum – I rise'. This has brought additional realities of urban inequality through the lens of a poem to the KNOW project.

For more information on the KNOW project, please have a look at the website: <https://www.urban-know.com>

Profiling for Community Action Planning in Portee Rokupa

Sulaiman Kamara

SLURC, Architecture Sans Frontieres (ASF-UK), FEDURP and other partners are collaborating with the community of Portee Rokupa to produce a settlement profile that will inform a Community Action Area Plan (CAAP). This project is funded through Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) and builds on previous work undertaken by SLURC and ASF-UK Change by Design programme, exploring inclusive city making in Freetown since 2017.

The project kicked off in February with a week-long workshop that focused on the tools and approaches of profiling for Community Action Planning and tested a toolkit that ASF-UK are developing with SLURC which is to be used across the city. The training week covered all aspects of the process including; understanding existing resources and data needs, data types and uses, participatory spatial research methods, ethical and inclusive processes for data collection, learning from and analyses of community-based data, equitable dissemination and tailored dissemination of community data for different audiences.

On the first day, a symposium was held with stakeholders including: academics, NGOs, CBOs, the Freetown City Council, the Ministry of Land, community representatives from Cockle Bay, Dworzark, and Portee Rokupa and members of the Community Learning Platforms to discuss the opportunities and constraints of community-based settlement profiling in Freetown. Based on this discussion a commitment was made to share existing information and data between stakeholders in order to move towards a consistent community-based settlement profiling approach across the city. Policy makers agreed to utilise this information more effectively in the endeavour to understand and improve the conditions of those living within informal communities.

As part of this research, one month was spent in Portee-Rokupa using participatory tools to map the settlement and collect baseline information to inform the profile and understand community priorities ahead of the planning process which will take place later in the year. The data has been collected and systematized and the analysis will follow shortly.



Data collection Portee Rokupa. Image: Ibrahim Bangura, SLURC

Due to precautionary measure to safeguard against the COVID-19 outbreak, a participatory photography training and exercise has been put on hold and will commence once it is deemed safe to conduct field work again.



New MSc in Development and Planning in African Cities (DePAC) at NU

Andrea Klingel

A key aspect of SLURC's work remit is education through capacity building and other activities that draw on its research findings. Through its work, SLURC has identified the need for a master's programme that is centred around the rapid urban development taking place in Sierra Leone. Together with Njala University (NU) it has therefore embarked on the processes of developing an MSc in Development and Planning in African Cities (MSc DePAC).

This new MSc will not just focus on Freetown and cities in Sierra Leone but broaden its perspective to include urban issues in sub-Saharan African cities. The aim is to deliver a master's course that is different from other development or urban planning courses currently on offer in Africa by tapping into external resources. This will allow students to reflect on international standards in order to go beyond other NU postgraduate courses.

A two-day learning exchange workshop, originally scheduled for May but postponed due to COVID-19, will bring a group of planning educators and pedagogues from a range of African cities together who have extensive experience in the design of planning curriculum in African Planning schools. During the "Transforming Planning Education in African Cities" workshop, we will discuss the relevance, objectives and outcomes of current urban planning education across Africa. The participants will also have the opportunity to discuss how higher education can support future urban practitioners in developing skills, values, and capacities for planning cities challenged by rapid urbanisation, decentralisation, high levels of informality, colonial legacies and high exposure to impacts of climate change.

The learning from the workshop will feed into the development of the content of the MSc, and other activities such as the SLURC/DPU ESD Learning Alliance. The aim is to offer the MSc DePAC course from the 2021 academic year with information course content, application process and costs being available towards the end of 2020.

SLURC welcomes UCL Fellow and New Research Officer to the team!

SLURC is delighted to welcome two new members to the team.

In December 2019, Yasmina Yusuf joined the SLURC office as a UCL Fellow. She is working a range of activities including conducting research on urban mobility, developing a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework for the organisation and overseeing knowledge management & communications activities.

Yasmina brings over 4 years' experience and has extensive knowledge working in both Africa and Asia. Most recently, she worked as a Consultant for Oxford Policy Management (OPM) on the DFID funded project 'Maintains', which focuses on supporting the management of shocks such as floods, droughts, disease outbreaks and population displacement. She was also a Consultant for the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), where she worked on a report for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on urban poverty and resilience in Indonesia, the Philippines and Bangladesh. She has an MSc from UCL's Bartlett Development Planning Unit and a BA from Humboldt University in Berlin.

More recently, in April 2020, Amadu Labor joined the team as Research Officer.

Amadu has a BA in Development Studies from the University of Makeni and a BSC in Agricultural Education from the Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology. Over the last two years Amadu has regularly worked with SLURC as a data collector and intern on the ESD Learning Exchange. In addition to this, he has been working as a voluntary teacher for more than five years and is an active member of FEDURP. He also worked as a malaria faith champion and during the Ebola outbreak was a case investigator.



Yasmina Yusuf. Image: Oxford Policy Management



Amadu Labor. Image: SLURC



Aberdeen Bridge area during the three day lockdown. Image: Andrea Klingel, SLURC

Other News & Updates

COVID-19 and its impact on SLURC

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, SLURC's way of working has been adapted following guidelines from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Sierra Leone government to ensure minimal risk to partners, communities, beneficiaries and staff.

Fieldwork on all our projects has been halted until the foreseeable future and the majority of staff are working mainly from home, to ensure minimal exposure to the virus. Meetings are being held virtually through zoom or skype.

SLURC is closely monitoring the situation as the number of cases continues to rise in Sierra Leone and its neighbouring countries. We will adapt our guidelines in line with official recommendations both, nationally and internationally.

We strongly urge everyone to stay safe, keep social distancing and take precautionary measures such as regular hand washing.

SLURC general update

SLURC outgrew its previous office and moved to more spacious premises on 17a Hill Cot Road, just off the Kingharman Road/Hill Cot Road roundabout. Not only will this allow SLURC to further expand but it also provides a much quieter working environment for increased productivity and a great view of Freetown. The premise includes a training room that can be hired which has a capacity of up to 35 people (cabaret style) Internet and other necessary equipment for workshops/training is being provided and catering can be arranged. Please contact Andrea Klingel on 07999 5463 for more information.

In other news, SLURC has acquired a DJI - Mavic Air Drone and staff will soon be trained on how to operate the drone as well as process the data that it captures. The research team are excited to incorporate this new technology in SLURC's research activities, as it will allow us to create more accurate maps and take high quality aerial images amongst many other things. With time, SLURC will offer this service to external partners. More information will follow, so watch this space.

This newsletter is also available on our website: www.slurc.org

