SLURC

Social Learning for Building Resilience

A research report on how crisis can foster social learning processes for building the resilience of communities in informal settlements of Freetown, Sierra Leone

SIERRA LEONE URBAN RESEARCH CENTRE

Milimer Morgado

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My full academic research report is available on request. Further comments are also welcome and can be sent to Milimer Morgado at milimer.morgado.15@ucl.ac.uk.

List of Acronyms

CBDMC	Community Based Disaster Management Committee
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CODOHSAPA	Centre of Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EVD	Ebola virus disease
FCC	Freetown City Council
FEDURP	Federation of Urban and Rural Poor
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice surveys
MLCPE	Ministry of Land, Country Planning and Environment
NASCIA	National Security and Central Intelligence Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ONS	Office of National Security
SDI	Shack/Slum Dweller International
SLYMCA	Sierra Leone Young Men's Christian Association
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
YCI	Y Care International
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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Executive Summary

More than half of the world's population resides in urban areas. Western African cities are some of the most rapidly urbanising regions worldwide, and Sierra Leone is no exception. Almost half of Sierra Leoneans live in urban areas such as Freetown, and this number is projected to increase over time. African urbanisation trends place urban dwellers in a vulnerable position to the crises and disasters faced by cities. These vary in type ranging from natural disasters to human-induced disasters, such as economic shocks, conflict-related crises and even health epidemics.

Slum residents are extremely vulnerable to shocks, with limited access to effective coping mechanisms coupled with diverse structural factors, such as inadequate water provision, sanitation and health services, posing barriers to their development. Nonetheless, there is a way to transform these challenges into opportunities, by viewing disasters as a chance to re-think and re-build urban systems, enhancing their resilience and strengthening emergency responses in urban settings.

Essentially, strengthening current mechanisms for disaster risk management (DRM)[1] requires cross-collaboration among all urban stakeholders and increasing the presence of the urban majority—slum communities—in disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies, policies and decision-making. One in three Sierra Leoneans is a young person, therefore, young people need to be viewed as agents of change in recovery processes and disaster responses.

Recent urban crises such as the Ebola Outbreak 2014-16 in Western Africa required a shift from government-led approaches to community-led ones, placing communities at the centre of the response and acknowledging the centrality of community leaders and youth community-based organisations in the success of the response. Therefore, it is critical to study what lessons are being learned from disaster responses, how they are being learned and what are the factors that can foster an inclusive learning environment underpinned by collaborative action and information flows between all levels of power.

Key recommendations

- In addition to evaluating individual and group learning processes, it is necessary to understand the broader social context where communities are set in in order to recognise their capacity to adapt to and mitigate environmental disturbances.
- Governmental institutions need to recognise that resilience is not only about bouncing back, adapting and preserving existent structures; it also requires cross-scale communication, trust and vibrant social networks.
- Therefore, building resilience requires key enablers such as partnerships and social networks that include diverse actors, particularly slum dwellers. Without them, social learning processes are prevented from developing and progressing.
- Building communities' resilience requires abandoning traditional notions which sustain that resilience can be enhanced without making substantial changes in systems, preserving the status quo, deepening power inequalities and excluding community leaders from decision-making processes.
- It is fundamental that social networks are supported and connected to both local and central governments, since they are the web that ties together a system's adaptive capacity and opens the door for transformative capacity, with wider spheres of influence and vertical flows of information moving upward.
- Pro-poor policies need to move towards an integrated place-based resilience that would actually benefit vulnerable communities rather than focusing just on responding to international legalisation agreements with the risk of making citizens responsible for their own disaster risk reduction preparedness and emergency response.

1. DRM and disaster risk reduction (DRR) will appear interchangeably throughout the report, this due to the transition from DRM approaches to DRR implemented by the ONS following the Hyogo Framework.

- When official institutions view community-based organisations (CBOs) as just 'volunteers' without any formal recognition, all the progress achieved by CBOs in building communities' resilience is hindered.
- The degree to which institutions support communities will define the success of processes for building the resilience of communities and their capacity to withstand future shocks.

The report starts with an introduction to the research project (Chapter 1) and then goes on to give an overview of social learning for building resilience, enabling factors and processes (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 then describes the research locations: Sierra Leone, Freetown and the informal settlements: Marbella, Colbot, Kroo Bay and Dworzack, followed by an outline of the methodology of the research (Chapter 4). Analysis and discussion of the results and findings of the research are outlined in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes and provides ideas for further research and recommendations for projects and programmes.

1. Introduction

Western Africa is one of the most rapidly urbanising regions worldwide, which places slum residents in a vulnerable position to shocks, crises and disasters. However, urbanisation challenges can generate pathways for building resilience and opportunities to improve urban systems. In 2014 almost 40% of Sierra Leoneans were living in urban areas such as Freetown, with 75.6% of the urban population living in slums.[2] Therefore, Sierra Leone's urban landscape needs to be re-imaged 'from the slums' since is where the vast majority of urban dwellers live and will continue to unless political forces change the existing urban trend.

The Ebola outbreak (2014-2016) in West-Africa was one of the largest, most devastating and complex crises since the discovery of the disease, which went beyond the boundaries of a health crisis transforming into a deadly epidemic, disrupting both socio-economic and educational sectors. The rapid spread of the virus was largely attributed to diverse structural factors, including inadequate access to water and sanitation, fragile government-society relations and low levels of confidence in state institutions, which affected the communication between the state and its citizens.[3]

Successful responses to fight the Ebola virus focused on community-led approaches and cross-sectoral collaboration bringing together government, NGOs and civil society. The success of these approaches was underscored by the active participation of youth leaders and community-based organisations (CBOs)2. Although the country's structures were not able to cope with the impacts of the crisis, the large response to the outbreak offered opportunities to rebuild and re-think the country's structures and build their resilience.

This study seeks to advance an understanding of the mechanisms through which social learning occurs and its enabling factors, as well as the notion of shocks as triggers for social learning processes and their potential positive impacts on community resilience. The study of the participation of youth CBOs in the Ebola Outbreak 2014-16 that occurred in Freetown, Sierra Leone, will be used as an entry point. Expected outcomes.

Exploring and questioning what is being learned from crises and disasters by governmental institutions and the urban majority—slum communities—and the impact it had on the disaster management structure of Sierra Leone is crucial to prevent future disasters.

Therefore, this research seeks to answer some of these questions by adopting as analytical lenses the notion of social learning for building resilience. It will do so by exploring the incorporation of communities into DRM structures, the spread of practices and beliefs from the bottom-up, cross-collaboration among different stakeholders, and the placement of communities at the centre of responses, with youth as agents of change in recovery processes and future responses.

2. (UN-HABITAT, 2016)
3. (UNDP et al., 2015)

2. An overview: Social learning for building resilience, enabling factors and processes

2.1 Social learning

Social learning is a process whereby individuals that seek to improve a situation that affects the overall community get together and take action collectively. This form of learning moves beyond the individual level to become situated in social units, through social interactions and inputs of multiple stakeholders including those who have been habitually marginalised.[4] It is also a form of decision-making and problem-solving that leads to changes in understanding, practices and relations among the members of a community.[5]

2.2 Social learning and shocks

This study focuses on social learning as a fundamental element of communities' capacity to respond to existing and future shocks, exploring the notion of shocks as activating agents or activating events. The capacity of shocks to foster change will depend on whether social relations are able to challenge the status quo and protect those who are highly vulnerable. Nonetheless, shocks can become windows of opportunity for building the resilience of communities.[6]

2.3 Social learning for building resilience

Building resilience is a process rather than an outcome, whereby communities are capable of identifying, reflecting and adapting their own practices to manage uncertainty and change. Social learning processes can become indispensable for building resilience as an adaptation.

Examples of social learning for building resilience exist under a shared environment, with linked organisations actively collaborating for future and present responses through processes of collaborative action and community participation. Therefore, social learning evolves thanks to the input of multiple stakeholders, fundamentally those traditionally marginalised.[7]

By learning collectively, people become critically aware of their circumstances by sharing reflections and actively participating in disaster risk reduction initiatives, becoming more effective in building resilience than the sum of individual learnings.

2.4 Enabling factors of social learning for building resilience

The resilience of a community not only depends on infrastructure development, democratic governments, innovation and technology, but also in factors that enable a conducive learning environment. Likewise, resource inequities need to be addressed in order to enable communities to build capacities for resilience. Social learning requires the existence of learning platforms where stakeholders can share views and exchange information, integrating different ways of thinking necessary for the formulation and applications of decisions, that benefit slum dwellers and those located at the lowest levels of power

4. (Reed et al., 2010)
5. (Harvey et al., 2013)
6. (Castán Broto et al., 2014)
7. (Sharpe et al., 2015)

structures.[8]

Therefore, a conducive environment is one where institutions and organisations shared both knowledge and spheres of influence allowing information to flow vertically instead of horizontally. Figure 1 shows the enabling factors necessary for promoting learning environments where individuals actively participate in their communities and are supported by governmental institutions, following the social learning principle of knowledge that moves from the individual level to be placed in larger social units.

2.5 The processes of social learning for building resilience

This study incorporates diverse frameworks for social learning and resilience evaluation. Social Learning processes can be hard to quantify which poses a challenge to building resilience. Methods for measuring social learning are scarce and vary depending on the conceptualisation used.[9]

Since social learning requires learning to move from the individual to larger social units, specific processes are placed within levels, with individuals working actively in their communities that are supported by institutions. However, processes will influence all levels; network activation requires the presence of diverse actors from all scales, moving through the existing connections and partnerships between actors as shown in Figure 2.

Processes serve as indicators of resilience which can also be defined as attributes of a system—comprising individuals, communities and institutions. Therefore, the lack or existence of these attributes will determine the likelihood of a community of being able to deal with uncertainty.[10]

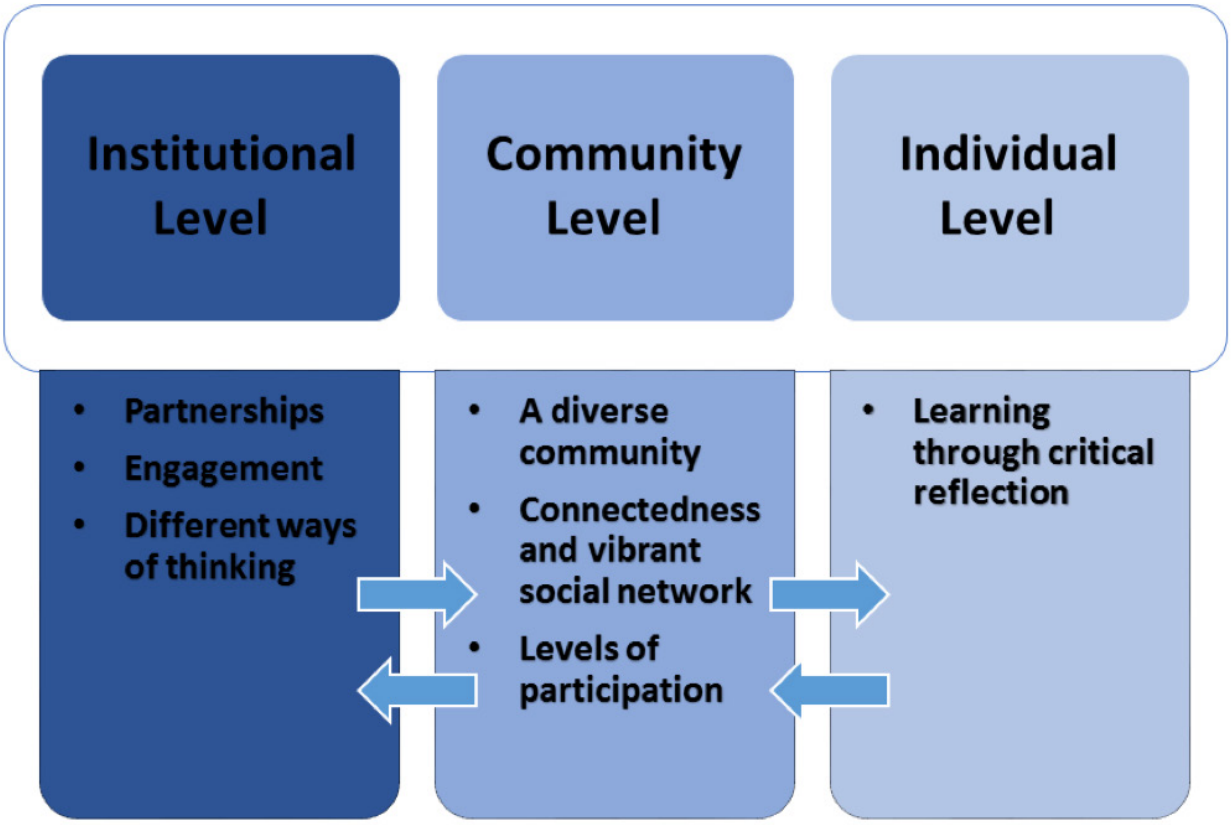

Figure 1: Enabling factors of social learning for building resilience

Source: Author contributions based on Sharpe et al., 2015.

8. (Smith et al., 2016)
9. (Sharpe et al., 2015)
10. (Becker et al., 2011)

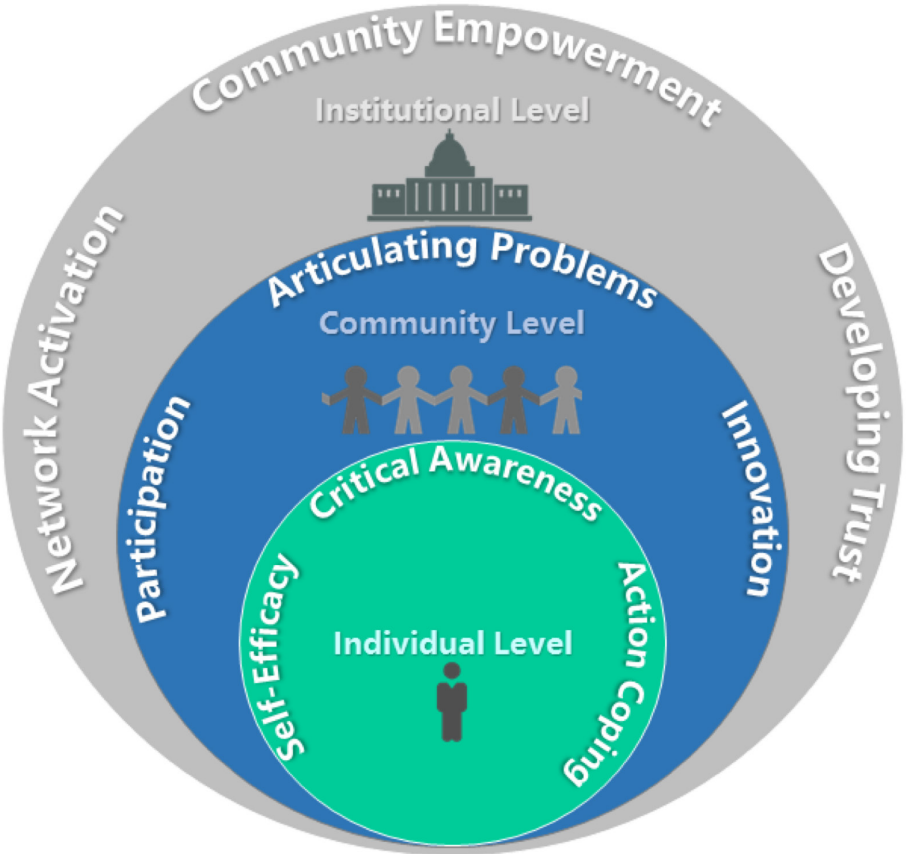

Figure 2: Processes of social learning for building resilience

Source: Author contributions based on Becker et al., 2011, p.1.

3. Methodology

Figure 3: Conducting an interview with Marbella's CBO

The empirical research in this study evaluates how social learning processes can foster resilience and if these can be triggered by shocks, in addition to the underlying factors that predetermine the likelihood of social learning to be fostered— enabling factors of social learning for building resilience. These factors can also be translated to other disaster studies and assessed through reviews of policies and management structures.

A case study approach was adopted to assess the strategy by exploring youth CBOs of Freetown's informal settlements and thus evaluating their social learning processes for building resilience. This comprised only youth CBOs instead of any CBO, due to the degree in which youth groups were involved in the Ebola response as reflected in post-crisis reports. Although youth are instrumental for the development of Sierra Leone, they remain underrepresented among the existing structures. Thus, this research seeks to enlighten the possibilities CBOs have of being integrated into official structures and the degree in which this is reflected in the DRM environment.

The six CBOs and the four targeted communities were purposely selected based on their involvement and interest in DRM activities, from which two (Dworzack and Colbot) were known to be active and had a long engagement with community disaster management committees. The remaining CBOs were selected based on their willingness to be interviewed and their interest in participating in the research. The primary method for data collection adopted was semi-structured interviews in addition to field observation of communities, literature reviews and desk research. A total of 11 in-depth interviews were held, 6 of these were CBO members and the rest were representatives from national institutions and NGOs. The aim was to connect information to the levels of DRM structure and to place CBDMCs in the general context of DRR. Additionally, field observations of the communities were conducted at the same time as interviews.

4. Sierra Leone

Figure 4: Freetown landscape

Around 40% of Sierra Leoneans reside in urban areas and are even more concentrated in Freetown, where the proliferation of slums rose following the country's 11-year civil war[11] that took place between 1991 and 2002; in 2014 75.6% of Sierra Leoneans residing in urban areas lived in slums[12]. Freetown's population in 2012 was approximately of 998,000 inhabitants and is expected to double by 2028, according to the national census conducted in December 2015 the western area urban where Freetown is located had a population, 1,050,301 inhabitants[13]. However, the provisional results did not offer which percentage of these correspond to slum dwellers and if they took into account all the people residing in informal settlements.

4.1 Freetown

Freetown has at least 61 informal settlements. Urbanisation processes have negatively impacted slum communities in Freetown, causing people to live in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. In spite of this, no national urbanisation policy or plan has yet been developed, thus little control over local planning is enforced, causing an increase in informality and unguided growth.[14]

This research evaluates the concept of social learning for building resilience in six youth CBOs from four slum communities of Freetown: Marbella, Colbot, Kroo Bay and Dworzack, where the indicators of enabling factors and social learning processes were evaluated. Figure 5 shows a map with key facts for each community and their location.

11. (CODOHSAPA and FEDURP, 2011)
12. (UN-HABITAT, 2016)
13. (Statics Sierra Leone, 2016)
14. (MLCPE and FCC, 2014)

Figure 5: Map of targeted communities, Freetown, Sierra Leone.
Source: Author contributions. Base map: © OpenStreetMap, 2016.

4.1.1 Marbella, Colbot, Kroo Bay and Dworzack

Marbella and Colbot are coastal settlements, with approximately 2,195 and 6,607 inhabitants correspondingly.[15] Both communities are susceptible to seasonal flooding predominantly during the rainy season followed by windstorms.

Kroo Bay is an old coastal settlement established in the 20th century, located in the city centre, is home to approximately 10,989 inhabitants[16] and is one of the largest slums of Freetown. It is dangerously situated in the convergence of two main drainages from the city centre that empties into the community, causing flash floods.[17]

Dwozarck is a hillside slum located to the west of the outskirts of Freetown, with an estimated population of 16,500 dwellers. The community experiences landslides coupled with rolling boulders, storm damages and flooding as a consequence of deforestation, and erosion from rainwater runoff.[18]

4.2 The Disaster Management context of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has experienced disasters in various forms over the years, one being the devastating civil war that ended in 2002. As part of the reconstruction strategy, the 2002 National Security and Central Intelligence Act (NASCIA) was decreed.[19] In this act, the Office of National Security (ONS) acquired the role of the government's primary coordinator of all prevention and national responses to emergencies (human-made or natural). Subsequently, the Disaster Management Department (DMD) was launched as the nation's central organisation responsible for DRM and is one of the eleven directorates within the ONS.[20]

15. (CODOHSAPA and FEDURP, 2011)
16. (Shack/Slum Dweller International (SDI), 2009)
17. (Menjor, 2012)
18. (Cumming, 2012)
19. (Massaquoi and Sesay, 2014)
20. (UNISDR, 2010)

5. Results

5.1 Enabling environmental factors of social learning for building resilience

A community's capacity to adapt tends to be facilitated when grassroots actors are fully involved, and partnerships are imperative for resilience as they signify joint initiatives for collective action.[21] Building resilience can be undermined without significant partnerships between citizens and governmental institutions.

Findings showed that the Sierra Leonean structure for DRM maintains a hierarchical, top-down approach. Decentralisation efforts started with NASCIA through the Provincial and District Security committees (NASCIA, 2002) and more recently with the 2004 Local Government Act that attributes some DRR directives to local councils, and Freetown City Council (FCC) has its own DRM committee.

However, in the case of Freetown's DRR, power imbalances and a predominance of a top-down flow among vertical interplays remain the case. Overall, Sierra Leone DRR's flow of information relies heavily on technical expertise, funding and status, which benefits top-down flows from governments to local actors, with few local knowledge initiatives flowing upwards. However, these can be addressed by creating rewarding and equitable partnerships.

5.2 Partnerships

Sierra Leone recognises that a coordinated DRM programme is based upon partnerships as the joint capacity of the State and other agencies.[22] Among their partners, there are the Sierra Leone Red Cross and the Environment Protection Agency. Key regional memberships include the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union Agreement. In contrast, partnerships between communities and the State are poor, lacking direct engagements between formal DRR structures and CBOs.

Social learning processes can only facilitate the incorporation of marginalised groups and create contexts for the converge of diverse viewpoints when successful partnerships exist. Therefore, Sierra Leone's DRR institutions need to realise and create opportunities for grassroots participation in order to build social networks capacity for effective decision-making under uncertainty.

Efforts for the creation of contexts for social learning need to bring together actors from all sectors, which essentially calls for institutionalising the participation of CBDMCs in DRR governance. Institutional settings give collective action the necessary constitution and direction to crisis response beyond spontaneous and unstructured reactions to emergencies,[23] such as the ones adopted during the Ebola virus disease (EVD) response.

5.3 Engagement

In terms of international legal framework, the most influential was the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which inspired the development of the Disaster Management Policy draft in 2007. This framework has now been superseded by the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction 2015-2030.[24] Among

21. (Pelling, 2003)
22. (ONS, 2006)
23. (Cannon and Müller-Mahn, 2010)
24. (IFRC, 2012)

the national DRR instruments are the National Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan draft created for the coordination of DRM activities and recovery from disasters among the different stakeholders.

In 2007 the Sierra Leone Disaster Management Policy was drafted with the aim of integrating DRM with sustainable development efforts. However, in 2013 it was still awaiting ratification from Parliament to enact it into law. The policy approach seeks to increase political commitment; therefore, without the government's official endorsement, DRM policy and plans cannot be mainstreamed into other agencies or ministries and the resilience of communities cannot be built.

This absence of legal binding also denotes a lack of commitment of key stakeholders to DRR issues. Furthermore, the DMD does not receive direct budget allocations from the government since is not an autonomous agency; nonetheless, in 2009 efforts for its separation started. Consequently, activities are mainly supported by donor agencies and INGOs. A Disaster Management Fund was launched in 2012; though in 2016 it had not yet reached its financial goal.

The capacity to mobilise physical, social and financial resources in an effective manner will influence the effectiveness of any emergency responses to future events. Sierra Leone's DRR institutions need to improve their political belief in the value of taking actions. This can be achieved through persistent engagements in developing effective solutions and legislative instruments for the management of DRR issues.

5.4 Different ways of thinking

Urban development in Freetown and DRR issues are viewed differently by institutions and communities, and communities' vision is not fully integrated into development plans. Promoting social learning for resilience requires building consensus over strategies instead of their imposition, as well as negotiation to manage conflicting views.[25] Moreover, learning fundamentally involves negotiation of meaning, as the converge of participation and rectification of all actors. Therefore, social learning processes require mutual engagement and shared values.[26]

Slum communities are in continuous threat of eviction since they are regarded as 'illegal' by government officials. Although some dwellers are willing to be relocated, the fundamental agenda of CBOs supports development 'in-situ' (slum-upgrading). Contrastingly, the national government and the ONS aim to remove people from 'risk' using resettlement strategies — voluntary or forced.

Freetown's slum communities have the capacity to evaluate their own conditions as demonstrated through the development of Community Profiling Enumeration Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) reports developed with the support of SLYMCA. Nonetheless, these have not been fully recognised or acknowledged in developmental strategies.

5.5 Diverse communities

One of the main attributes of Freetown's slums is diversity. Large coastal slums such as Kroo Bay have complex internal economies, with markets, and a diversity of professions within the slums, ranging from small entrepreneurs and craftsmen to nurses, teachers and government employees. Not only do they have diverse capabilities but they are also strong creative forces; one example is the upsurge of urban

25. (Sharpe et al., 2015)
26. (Wenger, 1998)

farming from old waste deposits in the eastern part of the city.[27]

However, diversity is only instrumental when there are vibrant social networks and a free flow of information across all connections. When the flow is constrained or partial, diversity becomes a hindrance.

5.6 Connectedness and vibrant social network

Sierra Leone's National Platform for DRR leads the disaster management structure. It is comprised of a multi-sectoral group presided by the Vice-president of the country and encompasses ministries, agencies, district councils and others. Then, the ONS acts as the coordinator of all forms of emergencies. The ONS is followed by lower administrative units, at the district level are the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs) and at the chiefdom level the Chiefdoms Disaster Management Committees, both committees have a security coordinator from the ONS.

Finally, at the community level are the Community Based Disaster Management Committees (CBDMCs), which are considered by the ONS as 'volunteer groups' for DRR initiatives and therefore are not officially a constituent of the DRM structure. Their membership is mainly constituted by youth from slum communities and members of existing CBOs, such as the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP). They hold the lead in DRR activities inside their communities and often support NGO-led initiatives in their communities. Figure 5 describes Sierra Leone's DRR management structure based on the aforementioned classification.

Although the presence of DRR actors from all levels exist, equal levels of participation do not. Social learning processes begin when all stakeholders realise their interdependence and agree that collective participation will yield better results than unilateral actions. This not only requires the presence of major stakeholders in network activation processes but also the integration of a wide range of actors. Therefore, a rich social network of civil society actors can shape the capacity of adaptation of institutions and organisations, and their connectedness will facilitate flows of information across all levels.

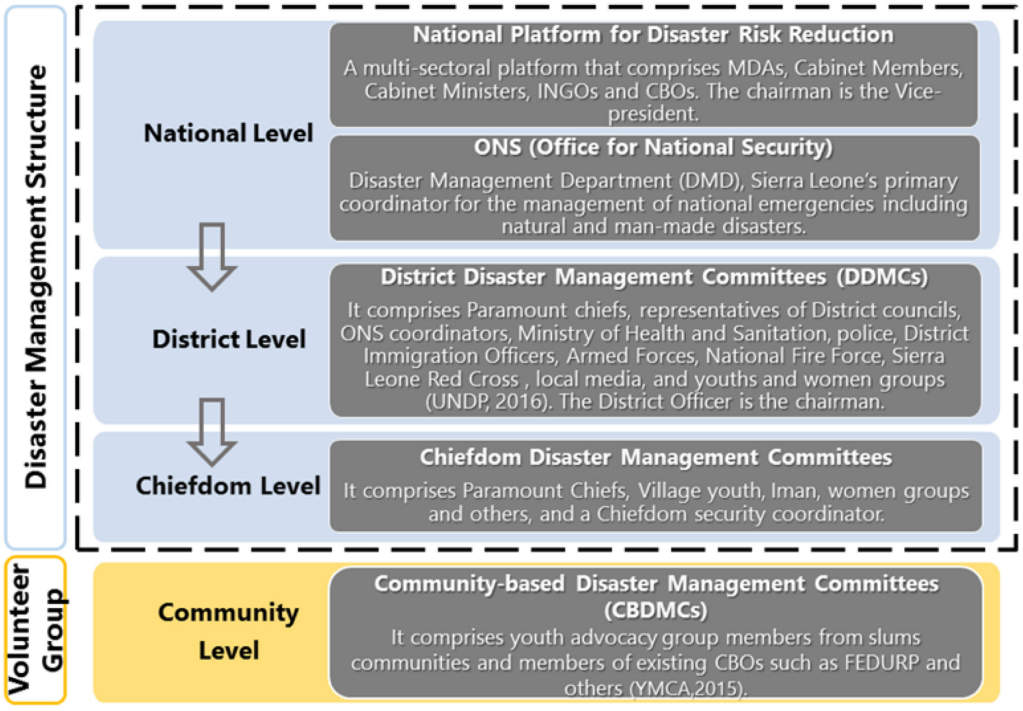

Figure 6: Disaster risk management structure of Sierra Leone

Source: Author contributions based on interviews and testimonials

27. (Home Leone, 2016)

Institutionalising communities' participation is fundamental for enabling social learning processes that could lead to resilient communities. Allowing the communication and inclusion of diverse opinions not only develops trust between actors but also a commitment to what is being decided and acted upon.

5.7 Participation and influence of opinions

Relations between the community and political stakeholders in Freetown are weak because of a deficient flow of information between the two groups. The Government of Sierra Leone relies greatly on external consultants for the evaluation and provision of solutions to slum communities, rather than embracing locally-produced reports, even though they are more familiarised with their everyday struggles.

Local NGOs such as the YMCA act as the 'pivot' of communication dynamics between DRR actors at different levels. They inform institutions such as the ONS about the state of slum communities and vice versa. CBOs, when asked about how they communicate with the ONS, explained:

> *"Our first priority is to report to YMCA… so in terms of channel of communication, our first set of communication is YMCA, and then we can ask YMCA if they want to pass on the information, and they said yeah we can talk to the ONS, then at the same time if ONS want to invite us to a meeting, they can pass it to YMCA".*
> A CBO member.

Consequently, when asked about their participation in DRR decision-making they claimed:

> *"Our voices are heard directly to YMCA and indirectly to those who are responsible".*
> A CBO member.

This clearly reinforces YMCA's central role of communication enabler.

The possession of information is central to power. Information can be used as a means of excluding grassroots groups from formal decision-making. Information flows can define the way political actors relate to each other and legitimise authority in policymaking.[28]

Horizontal flows of information were found at the community level, between CBDMCs in the form of 'inter-community meetings', which are essentially a form of local knowledge exchange. When one community is performing well with their DRR activities and another is performing less well, successful CBDMCs assist weaker CBOs by exchanging good practices and potential solutions. This, in turn, improves the community's capacity for identifying vulnerabilities and producing community-led strategies to mitigate risk.

5.8 Learning through critical reflection of self

CBO members interviewed expressed that they participate in training activities supported by different organisations including SLYMCA and even the ONS. However, state-led training is 'sporadic' or responds to guidelines created for specific institutional programs rather than forming continuous channels for dialogue between the two, which could develop an ever-evolving learning process. Although critical reflection is enabled through learning spaces such as 'inter-community meetings' for CBDMCs and

28. (Pelling, 2003)

citizens interested in participating in DRR activities, greater support from state institutions is indispensable for citizens to be capable of advancing social learning processes and influencing overall DRR decision-making.

5.8 The Ebola outbreak as a trigger of social learning

The Ebola outbreak that hit the nation in 2014 and lasted 18-months one of three countries in the Mano River Union to suffer from the worst recorded Ebola outbreak since the disease was first diagnosed in 1976, with more than 8,000 cases of infection and more than 3,000 confirmed deaths.[29]

The crisis started as a localised health emergency, however, the combination of a weak health system and poor provision and access to basic public services helped to aggravate the rapid spread of the disease and difficulties of responding effectively and quickly to the emergency. The response exposed the fragility of the country's urban system, what was seen as normal before the outbreak was unsustainable in the long-term, any disaster would have produced similar outcomes.[30]

Key approaches that contained and stopped the transmission of the disease included awareness campaigns of preventive actions, the importance of maintaining good hygiene such as hand-washing and contact tracing. These were largely accomplished by increasing community understanding through peer educators and supplying hand-washing facilities in communities.[31]

5.9 Network activation, community empowerment, and developing trust

In the case of the outbreak, some features such as community empowerment and network activation were forced upon stakeholders by the nature of the emergency and allowed participatory processes and innovation to flourish momentarily rather than permanently. In the case of empowerment and developing trust processes, deficient enabling factors such as the influence of opinions and different ways of thinking predispose their occurrence.

Empowerment occurs through cooperative linkages between all stakeholders, where citizens have the power to influence what happens in their communities.[32] Therefore, as long as CBOs are prevented from direct engagement, participation and satisfying forms of collaborative action, they will not be fully empowered and trust between communities and government institutions cannot be built.

5.10 Community participation

In the case of Marbella, the EVD struck them on four occasions, from which they learned that they had a responsibility to form a collective understanding of the epidemic and to educate their community about the virus. Marbella's CBOs participated in multi-stakeholder meetings as well as awareness-raising campaigns in communities, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, and the elderly.

CBOs were initially challenged with low numbers of youth participation. However, they mentioned that

29. (Government of Sierra Leone, 2015)
30. (UNDP et al., 2015)
31. (Y Care International and YMCA, 2016)
32. (Becker et al., 2011)

the number of people interested in volunteering for DRR activities increased after the outbreak. Colbot's CBO stated that Ebola was difficult to fight because everybody saw it as an external issue; nonetheless, through focal group discussions with communities, people's awareness of DRR initiatives increased. In Freetown's DRR structures, social interactions are likely to happen at the community level rather than between institutions and communities. Therefore, only among CBDMCs, collective capacity for action is nurtured. A change in this trend can only happen if government institutions improve their engagement capacity.

5.11 Innovation

> *Innovation was also fostered from the EVD response. A young EVD volunteer described that: "Innovation is not just about technology. Innovation is about how organisations and institutions work with young people"*[33]
> A young CBO member

Youth were instrumental in integrating local and scientific knowledge. An example of this was a young woman from Colbot's CBDMC; she explained that the training carried out by YMCA on proper hand-washing inspired her to become a peer educator and to impart learnings on EVD and prevention techniques to her neighbours and family members, overcoming rooted customs.[34]

It is evident that the shock fostered innovation as a social learning process with the promotion and spread of strategies and coping mechanisms from the bottom up; in this case, from individuals to communities.

As CBDMCs' participation has not been integrated into DRM structures, trusting relationships and connectedness between institutions and communities are still weak. This would have serious implications for future responses, as well as in the adaptive capacity of systems and processes for building slum community resilience. Therefore, the 'window of opportunity' to re-build vulnerable structures using EVD innovative practices has not been exploited.

5.12 Articulating problems

The ability of a community to articulate local problems and needs, disseminate information and discuss DRR issues is imperative for building resilience and communicating with stakeholders.[35] A crucial lesson from the response was that successful changes in behaviour and practices were largely motivated by the inclusion of grassroots groups and local leader in awareness campaigns and sensitization initiatives. These helped to form mutual concern over the risk of the disease and the need for re-evaluating their own behaviour, crucial aspects of a communities' capacity to articulate their local problematic.

Changes in habits and practices were mentioned by all CBOs; for example, hand-washing has become a daily practice for the population, which has led to containing the spread of other infective diseases within the community such as Cholera and Varicella. Dworzack's CBO expressed how the community's cleaning practices have improved since DRR preparedness is regarded as an important issue. Although they were being implemented before, now they are more effective. Watching over the health of the community is now part of the CBDMC priorities; every two months they organise house-to-house visits around the community to identify and support ill individuals.

33. (Kamara, 2016)
34. (YMCA, 2014)
35. (Becker et al., 2011)

5.13 Self efficacy

The outbreak also changed people's perception of the role of local leaders. In the case of Marbella, the community previously did not appreciate the value of the work of CBDMCs; however, during the Ebola response people were able to see the vital role they played in stopping the epidemic (i.e. by removing the sick from their houses). Marbella's CBO explained:

> *"Now people look at us like we are very important".*
> A CBO member

As a result, the self-efficacy of CBO members increased, reflected in their belief of being capable of bringing change to their communities. Now they carry reconstructive strategies to support youth who lost their family.

However, all CBDMCs, when asked about how prepared they felt to face a new outbreak or a disaster, answered that in terms of capacity and knowledge they feel better prepared and empowered to defeat disasters; however, logistics would be definitely a key challenge. They emphasised that due to the lack of financial resources available, they could not overcome any potential outbreak.

5.14 Action coping and critical awareness

Action copying as a form of critical reflection is determinant for building community resilience. It is reflected in their capacity to take action for themselves, and existent connections to the most vulnerable groups.

These attributes were displayed in Marbella's CBOs, through an example of replicating learnings through practical action. As they recently faced a high number of cases of 'chickenpox' (varicella), they were capable of attacking the issue, replicating the use of sensitisation campaigns and reaching vulnerable groups such as lactating mothers and parents of children under five – these methodologies were learned during the EVD response. As well, they mentioned how they attempt to be constantly available for the community in order to make sure 'it stops within the community'.

Likewise, critical awareness features were drawn from Kroo Bay's CBO comments. The training provided during the Ebola outbreak improved the community's ability to seek solutions to other DRR issues, and their capacity to perform preparedness measures for future events.
Social learning processes for building resilience at the personal level can be identified through an increase of citizens' beliefs in the benefits of DRR mitigation and preparedness, and that by actively participating in such activities, negative outcomes can be reduced.[36]

36. (Becker et al., 2011)

6. Conclusions, recommendations and further research

Figure 7: Drying clothes in the Marbella settlement

6.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Measuring enabling factors for the promotion of social learning processes brought to light many implications that can compromise not only the success of any future response but also projects for building slum community resilience and their development. However, changes in DRR governance can still be made. The inclusion of grassroots groups into 'official' structures is currently being pushed by CBDMCs and supported by INGOs and local NGOs. Institutionalising the participation of community-based organisations for DRM give collective action the necessary direction to crisis response beyond spontaneous and unstructured reactions to emergencies.

Resilience is not only about bouncing back, adapting and preserving existent structures. It also requires cross-scale communication, trust and vibrant social networks. Social learning processes can only facilitate the incorporation of marginalised groups when successful partnerships exist. State institutions, therefore, need to create opportunities for grassroots participation in order to expand the 'spheres of influence' and build social networks capable of effective decision-making under uncertainty.

Features of social learning were identified in CBOs in the form of individual learnings demonstrated in changes in practices and understandings, as a product of social interactions among community members such as awareness campaigns and meetings organised by CBDMCs and slum communities. However, CBDMCs need more training and support on their development, therefore the creation of formal learning platforms and the consolidation of existing ones such as CBDMCs and other CBOs is recommended, in order to advance social learning processes.
The EVD shock fostered innovation as a social learning process, along with the promotion and spread of strategies and coping mechanisms from the bottom up, in this case, from individuals to communities. Slum communities joined for collective action with the goal of defeating the Ebola epidemic, and as a result, alterations in practices and habits were formed in individuals as shown in the KAP surveys and

in the testimonies provided by CBO members. This underpins the notion that social learning processes in individuals can be triggered by 'activating agents'.

Nonetheless, enablers of social learning at the institutional level were found to be caused "temporarily" by the outbreak. Therefore, without key enablers such as partnerships and social networks that include diverse actors, particularly, slum dwellers, social learning processes are stopped from developing and progressing.

For CBDMCs to be perceived by official institutions only as 'volunteers' limits their capacity to bring change to their communities. Likewise, there is a need for social and political recognition and support from governmental institutions in order to increase the positive impacts that the initiatives deployed by them have in their communities. The lack of institutional recognition jeopardises all progress achieved by CBDMCs in building community resilience.

Decentralisation efforts in Sierra Leone's DRR management structure respond more to international legalisation agreements, such as the Hyogo Framework, rather than a true effort to forming collaborative alliances for adaptive capacity in the country. Therefore, DRR policies conceived under the existing premises have the risk of placing the burden of conducting DRR preparedness initiatives and emergency responses on citizens, rather than moving towards an integrated placed-based resilience strategy that would actually benefit vulnerable communities.

Finally, the traditional notion that resilience in communities can be enhanced without making substantial changes in systems functions is still in place. The Sierra Leone DRR system in its current form is still vulnerable to endogenous/exogenous shocks because adaptation to the EVD crisis was sought rather than the transformability of the system, which proved to be extremely vulnerable to the crisis.

6.2 Areas of further research

The findings of this study suggest a number of directions for future research:

1. A greater analysis needs to be carried out on the interactions between CBOs and other stakeholders such as INGOs and NGOS. Likewise, evaluating their weaknesses and strengthens and the long-term effects that disasters have in slum communities will help to create effective programs to build the resilience of CBOs and their communities. Evaluating additional settlements to the ones covered in this research will serve to complement, contrast and compare different learning processes and identify key mechanisms that can progress collective action.
2. Additional studies on how social learning influences building resilience will contribute to advancing an understanding of this emerging field and assess its effectiveness for the assessment of future responses and the vulnerability of urban systems. Understanding how we learn and what we learn from crises and disasters, can expose which approaches are more effective in responding to urban disasters in the context of slums and informal settlements.

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The centre aims at building the research and analysis capacity of urban stakeholders in Sierra Leone; making urban knowledge available and accessible to those who need it, prioritising the residents of informal settlements and their organisations; and delivering world-leading research in order to influence the country's urban policy and practice.

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The needs of disadvantaged young people in developing countries are often neglected, making the transition into adulthood difficult. We help young people develop alternatives to a future of poverty and empower them to contribute to the development of their communities.
http://www.ycareinternational.org

ABOUT YMCA SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone YMCA (SLYMCA) is one of the country's oldest youth serving organisations, established in 1912. SLYMCA's vision is a society where young people are empowered to be responsible and productive within their communities and Sierra Leone at large, providing opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential through developing innovative and participative programmes addressing young people's needs.

SLYMCA presently has 24 branches in all regions across the country, and through its work, SLYMCA is considered a leading NGO in the country, delivering socially relevant programming for young people and their communities.

ABOUT CODOHSAPA

The Centre of Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA) emerged from the Sierra Leone Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) 4-yr Slums Livelihood Project titled "Transforming Young People's Lives in Slum Settlements in Freetown". One key activity of this project was "to establish a local association of slum dwellers" based on the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) model. SDI is a loose transnational network of NGOs and slum dwellers federations supporting slum improvements in various developing countries. This local association has grown tremendously and now positions itself as a national civil society group representing the voice of the poor, which has been constituted as the women-led Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) and belongs to the SDI network.