

# SLURC

## URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN SIERRA LEONE:

LESSONS FROM SLURC'S  
RESEARCH IN FREETOWN



SIERRA  
LEONE  
URBAN  
RESEARCH  
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# **Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone: Lessons from SLURC's research in Freetown**

## **Conference Report**

19 June 2019

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# 1.0 Introduction

On 19 June 2019, the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) hosted a conference at the British Council auditorium, Freetown. The objectives of the conference were to showcase SLURC's work; raise awareness about informal settlements and related issues; challenge negative viewpoints about informal settlements and simplistic approaches; and shift opinions to influence policy makers and stakeholders; and provide a platform for discussion, networking, promote collaboration and strengthen the relationship between University College London (UCL) and Njala University (NU).

The theme of this conference was **“Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone: Lessons from SLURC's research in Freetown.”** The conference focused around four thematic research areas: (a) urban health (b) urban vulnerability, risk and resilience (c) urban livelihoods and the city economy (d) urban land and planning.

A total of over 150 people participated in the conference, including a high level delegation of representatives from University College London (UCL); Njala University; the Mayor of Freetown; representatives from the government of Sierra Leone's Ministries, Departments and Agencies; International and National Non-Governmental Organisations; and community members who have witnessed first-hand SLURC's interventions.

The conference was moderated by Braima Koroma, and Abdulai Benedict Conteh served as Rapporteur. Attached in Annex 1 is the conference programme.

## 2.0 Proceedings

With all protocols and courtesies observed, the conference opened with a series of keynote addresses from distinguished speakers, followed by presentations from researchers on 4 themes coupled with comments from practitioners and policymakers, and it ended with a plenary interactive session of questions and answers. The presenters and speakers from each session constituted the panelists in the plenary session. They responded to questions and comments from the audience and thus enhanced an interactive and learning atmosphere.

Further, the conference was divided into two major sessions – morning and afternoon. Written questions were placed on all tables for participants to brainstorm and weigh in with their experiences and viewpoints. The seating arrangement ensured each table had a mix of various stakeholders to encourage a wide range of views and relationship building throughout the conference day. The responses to those questions were collated at the end of the sessions.

Attached in Annex 2 are the questions for the morning and afternoon sessions.

### 2.1 Opening Session

The morning session opened with a short housekeeping address by Andrea Klingel, Director of Operations at SLURC. She thanked and welcomed all participants for gracing the occasion despite their busy schedules. She admonished participants to familiarize themselves with SLURC's work by collecting its newsletter, policy briefs and reports which were on display just outside the main auditorium. She also invited delegates to visit CODOHSAPA's showcasing of their work in the adjacent seminar room. CODOHSAPA is one of the consortium members of the Sustainability project of 'Pull Slum Pan Pipul' jointly funded by Comic Relief and DFID, also co-funders of the conference. Andrea introduced Dr. Joseph Macarthy, Executive Director of SLURC, who gave the welcome address which marked the official opening of the conference.

## 2.2 Welcome Address

*Dr Joseph Macarthy - Executive Director, SLURC*

“Thank you very much Andrea!

Just before I give my welcome address, I want to ask that we kindly stand and observe a minute of silence in respect of two of our former board members who just passed away very recently. I’m talking about Professor Osman Bah and Professor Lakkoh as well.

The honourable deputy minister, your worship the mayor, the vice provost of University College London, our renowned and eminent vice chancellor of Njala University, ladies and gentlemen, for the second time in a row in three and half years; SLURC is happy to welcome you to yet another conference which we now consider as one in a two year tradition. In 2017, we organised a similar conference on the topic *“formal and informal synergies toward a prosperous city”* which was held at the Golden Tulip hotel in Freetown nearly a week after the Motomeh landslide event. This year, we look at quite another topic *“urban transformation conference in Freetown”* which covers the entire work we have been doing in the last three and half years. Let me at this stage commend you all for your interest in this conference, and for finding time in your busy schedule to join us here today.

You may be aware that in much of Sierra Leone rapid urbanization and the variety of challenges associated with it – I’m talking here about challenges related to housing, slums formation, waste, and health are creating limits to the opportunities which cities and human settlements should offer. Nationally, the size of the urban population has increased from close to 19% in 1963 according to the national census to about 40.9 % in 2015. But while the urbanization rate is rising, the government and most city authorities have yet to realize that the threat that this presents to urban development is real, and the chaotic growth which characterized most cities and towns requires specific actions which ought to be urgently taken to improve the well being of the residents.

Nowhere in Sierra Leone is urbanization so great and has caused so much negative consequences on settlements than in the capital Freetown where rapid rural-urban migration, natural increase and ad-hoc rises in standards of living have resulted in the rise and spread of informal settlements. When we look around, we observe that Freetown like the other five cities in Sierra Leone are suffering from chaos, insufficient land use and major inadequacies in infrastructure and service provisioning. The resulting impact on especially the poor and what this means to urban planning is enormous. Hence the purpose of this conference is to bring together a community of practice which is neither sector nor actor specific.

We want to encourage the exchange between field experts, academics, the NGO community, private sector experts and local authorities. To enable this exchange, a range of actors from various institutions have been invited to the discussion on some of our research outputs; and to present their views on the issues and challenges of sustainable urban development in Sierra Leone. At the same time, we consider the conference as an opportunity to not only question the *“hows”* of our finding, but for you to also share your reflections on the *“whys”* of the immense challenges faced by our cities as a result of their rapid urban growth. It is our fervent hope that this conference will make a useful contribution to your understandings of the current challenges for a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable development of our towns and cities; and the kind of actions to take. We particularly require your inputs in making the discussion more enlightening, fruitful and interesting.

Finally, we hope that the discussion and exchanges that you will take part in and the contacts you make with other participants today will help to not only boost the consistency we must develop to keep a live discussion on the huge urban challenges we face, but also the kind of actions we need to take even if we have to do so with very limited resources. On that note, I want to thank you for your attention and to welcome you to today’s conference.”

Dr Macarthy went on to explain the programme itinerary for the day.

Andrea Klingel introduced Fatmata Shour - a young actress and dancer who grew up in the Akram Bomeh, an informal settlement in the East of Freetown and who performed a spoken



A photograph of Dr. Joseph MacCarthy, a Black man with short hair, wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a blue tie. He is standing behind a wooden podium, speaking into a microphone. A name tag on his lapel identifies him as 'Joseph MacCarthy, Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC)'. The background is a red curtain. A semi-transparent dark box is overlaid on the lower part of the image, containing white text.

**“WE WANT TO ENCOURAGE THE  
EXCHANGE BETWEEN FIELD  
EXPERTS, ACADEMICS, THE NGO  
COMMUNITY, PRIVATE SECTOR  
EXPERTS AND LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES”**

**DR JOSEPH MACARTHY**





word piece. The aim was to set the picture for the conference delegates of what it is like growing up in a Freetown slum and to hear Fatmata's best hopes for the future. She shared her lived experience through her poem. *'Life in the slums... still I rise'*.

## 2.3 Spoken Word: 'Life in the slums... still I rise'

Fatmata Shour reminisced on how her family – mother and four siblings - navigated their way amidst sporadic gunshots; seeing children's hands being cut off and migrated to Freetown on a wood van in the heat of the civil war.

On arrival in Freetown, *"We thought it was a relief to get to the city and hoped that things will be brighter for us once again, but that was a dream that never came to pass"* she noted. She categorically highlighted her struggles *"... long nights of sufferings and pains, sleepless nights with an empty stomach, nothing gained as we had no food to eat, nowhere to sleep. Sleeping in the field was our first and only choice or to find a place where rich people do not want to stay – a place where they avoid. That what brought us to a place people called the ghetto – a low neighborhood, poverty stricken, overcrowded, the hunter point, garbage packed, the wrong side of the track, popularly known to all as the slum. For us it was heaven, a place where we find peace."*

Aside from the challenges mentioned above, she went further to describe the "survival wars" they had fought in the slums. *"A war with mosquitoes, flies, rats and pigs, flooding, no proper schooling, no proper health services and no proper planning. We don't have homes in the slums, but houses. The question is would you blame us? Our focus is survival- finding ways and means to put food on the table..."*

In a more solemn and emotional tone, she commented on the prejudices she faced as a result of living in the slum. *"People recognize you by the way you talk and act which simply tells them where you are coming from. Sometimes in school, my colleagues would say you smell like someone coming from the slum. [...] No one cares about us. It feels like rejection..."*

In her closing remarks, she expressed an undying optimism and hopes for the future by calling on more collaborative engagements to address the issues of informal settlements. She noted that *"I am a strong woman and I can rise up to the top, powerful leaders of tomorrow wake up, wise up! Don't let our future break up; let our voices be heard. We care about our future; we want to move on to fulfill our dreams and ambitions. It is our vision that makes us visible. My greatest hope today is to go back to my slum communities and help them to stand strong, work with them to change that page and make a better life for all of us. Life in the slum still we rise. Thank you!"*

## 2.4 Statements from Keynote Speakers

### 1. Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr (OBE) – Mayor of Freetown.

"Fatmata certainly got us started on the right platform. As Braima has said, I met SLURC when I was on the campaign trail. I went to their office because they were the only ones as far as I knew who had or were doing any work or research on informal communities otherwise known as slums. I then went on to meet the Slum Dwellers Association and I know you guys are in here somewhere and CODOHSAPA. Why? because people living in informal communities represent 35% of the population of Freetown. So, today's conference is super important not just as an academic exercise, but also from the practical perspective of us engaging constructively with the significant number of the people who live in this city that we call home.

*'Transform Freetown'* is the agenda that we put together not in isolation but working with people right across all sectors – from the public sector, MDAs, development partners, NGOs,

**“WE CARE ABOUT OUR FUTURE;  
WE WANT TO MOVE ON TO FULFIL  
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VISIBLE”.**

**FATMATA SHOUR**



private sector, but significantly also from the social space. So SLURC have been partners in the development of Transform Freetown. They have been inputters into the development of Transform Freetown. But they've also done this alongside people like FEDURP and CODOHSAPA; the people who represent Fatmata who so eloquently described the challenges that she experienced everyday by people living on the wrong side of the tracks.

Transform Freetown is designed to address the most fundamental challenges our city faces. The driver of those challenges are myriad drivers, but one specific one, which Dr Joseph Macarthy alluded to in his welcome, is '*rapid rural -urban migration*.' Freetown is growing at 4.2 % per annum and this land space as we all know is very limited geographically because we are surrounded by the ocean and by the mountains. So, what has happened in the absence of planning has been a sprawl, has been of necessity; and people looking for a place to live has put significant pressure on our environment. It meant the trees have been cut down and we have less than 50% of the trees today than we had 10 years ago in the city. Similarly, with the mangrove swamps along the coasts; anybody who is familiar with our coastline will know that informal settlements start at Levuma and go all the way along right down to Allen Town. And those informal settlements are literally created from banked garbage. Yirah, the president of the Slum Dwellers Association, and I were at Kroo Bay a few weeks ago, and we were discussing alternative housing. I jumped and as we jumped, the ground beneath us moved because that ground is actually garbage. Huge impact for sanitation; huge impact for tourism potential which affects job creation; huge impact for water borne diseases which impact health and means that many children don't go to school because they are sick.

So, Transform Freetown is about addressing these in a structured manner recognising the integrated nature of urban planning and development. Its four clusters:

- Resilience
- Human Development
- Healthy City and
- Urban Mobility

Within Resilience, we start off with what feels like an obvious – environmental management. The mudslide and landslide of 2017 was just one moment in time, but there have been floods in our city every year for five years prior resulting in loss of lives and property to the tune of about \$2.5 million a year. So, environmental management was key, but we also have urban planning and housing which a lot of the research SLURC has done really has been helpful inputs into that thinking and revenue mobilization. On our website, you can find Transform Freetown, the website is [www.fcc.gov.sl](http://www.fcc.gov.sl) I won't go into all of it now, because I am here to open the conference that SLURC has organised and has very generously provided us the platform to speak about these issues.

I will, however, say that a major gap that we've had in responding to the challenges around rapid urbanization has been the lack of urban planning. I am really pleased that on the 7 March 2019, the central government through a press release issued by the Vice President putting in place a process of immediate devolution of 28 functions. Of those 28, three of them are going to be instrumental in our collective battle to address the challenges of informal dwellings, hazardous living, continued environmental degradation. Those three functions which have now been devolved to the city council – not just us but all 22 councils across the country – are firstly land use planning, secondly the issuance of building permits, and thirdly the preparation of local area plans. This is significant; it's massive and will go a long way in enabling the city council to fill the gap that has existed for over 20 years now. In doing so, we will be able to make use of the excellent research that SLURC and their partners have done.

The Community Action Area Plans which are core parts of SLURC's work will enable us to hear and see at community level thoughts which will be elevated into local area action plans. Similarly, the urban risk research work that SLURC has been involved with which pinpoints specific areas of risks within communities has already informed the flood mitigation work that many Freetonians know that we first implemented in 2018, and have implemented again in 2019 with the result that last year we went through the rainy season with no major flooding. Communities like Kroo Bay which is flooded every year for 15 years did not flood last year.





**“THIS CONFERENCE IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART IN THE TRANSFORM FREETOWN JOURNEY. IT BRINGS TOGETHER MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN WITH US SINCE WE STARTED”.**

**YVONNE AKI-SAWYERR (OBE)**

That is because we have the empirical evidence put together by the communities themselves with the support of FEDURP, CODOHSAPA and SLURC. We will build on that; we will use the World Bank published Multi City Hazard Risk report and we will ensure that our building permits regime through that process eliminate the possibility of getting a planning permit in a high hazard/risk zone. We will go beyond that and we will look at gradient above 25% for example, where if you put a house there, it is almost impossible for us as a city to service you with sanitation, with fire response – the fire engines can't get there, and off course we will also put restrictions in terms of proximity to water ways. Our floodings; our disasters that we experience daily are so directly influenced by the trend of houses/ homes being built in our water ways.

The policy briefs that SLURC have produced on informal settlements, and they've done excellent work in four communities Dworzark, Cockle Bay, Moyiba and Portee/Rokupa; that work will fit into our slum/ informal neighbourhood upgrading work that we are now developing with the World Bank. We are looking to tackle at least four informal communities for upgrading. As part of that, this is our target for 5000 affordable good quality homes. Also, there will be relocation out of some of those informal communities, but there will be upgrading – the bringing in of proper drainage; the bringing in of sanitation. At a minimum, ensuring that there is road access, so we don't have the tragic situation that we witnessed on the 4 March 2019, when we saw homes being burnt down in Kroo Bay with the fire engines being on site, but unable to access the fire.

This conference is a very important part in the Transform Freetown journey. It brings together many of the people who had been with us since we started. People who we've thought with; debated with us and helped us put together a concrete target and initiatives that we look to deliver over the next three years. Two years eleven months and twenty-five days if anyone is counting!

I am a firm believer that we go further when we go together. As we open this conference, I am grateful for the support of SLURC, UCL, Njala University, and all the partners sitting here. Your inputs will be very seriously regarded by us at Freetown City Council. It will form part of our continued layering of the evidence we need as we work together to transform Freetown.

Thank you and have a great conference.”

## **2. Prof Abdulai Mansaray – Vice Chancellor, Njala University.**

“The Deputy Minister of Technical and Higher Education, your Worship the Mayor of Freetown, the Vice Provost International of UCL, our distinguished colleagues from UCL, I stand in all protocols. It gives me a tremendous pleasure to be here as part of this initiative. We at Njala are particularly proud of the work that our colleagues have done in the past few years at SLURC. We pride ourselves as being a rural university. We are physically removed from Freetown and the other urban centers, but what we have seen SLURC doing is a demonstration that Njala has indeed developed a long arm to reach out into all aspects of the development of Sierra Leone.

I am particularly happy to underscore what her Worship the Mayor said, *“this is more than just an academic exercise, SLURC is providing the empirical bedrock on which we can predicate the development of our urban centres.”* What they have done is to provide us with greater understanding of the dynamics of our urban centres. We know that there are precedents. Our approaches to urban transformation have not always been informed by empirical evidences, and this is where SLURC is coming from. SLURC is providing those empirical evidence on which informed decisions and policies will be made, and I am happy the mayor emphasized that we are beginning to see progress in how we understand and transact the dynamics of our urban transformation.

I want to pay tribute to UCL on the grounds that we have had a very fruitful collaboration over the years; this is just one of them. We have partnered with UCL in other areas like health etc. and we want to see that partnership blossom. This is just the beginning of it, and I am happy that Njala has demonstrated the capacity to benefit immensely from our partnership. After our



preliminary discussions yesterday, we are sure that this is just the beginning of our partnership and we are looking forward to welcoming you to Njala tomorrow for you to see the modest facilities we have here, and how we are trying to leverage ourselves as an institution to make meaningful contributions to the development of Sierra Leone. We are positive about our partnership.

My statement will be brief as I just want to congratulate our colleagues at SLURC for the wonderful work they are doing in making Njala and Sierra Leone proud and I wish you a very successful conference. Thank you!"

### **3. Dame Nicola Brewer – Vice Provost International, UCL**

"Thank you very much Mr Koroma, Deputy Minister, Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Colleagues, and all friends here; I'm absolutely delighted to be back in Sierra Leone for what I am sure will be an engaging and insightful conference on urban transformations. I like the idea of lots of transformations in Sierra Leone.

Thank you very much to Mr. Koroma, Dr Macarthy and other colleagues at SLURC who invited me to say just a few words this morning to join in welcoming you all to this conference. I have been asked to speak briefly about how UCL's approach to global engagement fits so well with working in partnership with countries like Sierra Leone; cities like Freetown; centres like SLURC; and universities like Njala. We believe that we will achieve significant local and global impact by working together.

I first came to Sierra Leone almost 20 years ago when I worked in the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and I was very struck at the time – it was just after the civil war, by how critically important it is to work in partnership with national and local governments and institutions. Building capacity is a shared endeavor that all parties learn from working in the spirit of genuine partnership, relationships of mutual benefits which positively impacts on everyone involved. That kind of collaboration is definitely the best way to effect positive and lasting change. And it is that approach to collaboration that has stayed with me ever since and it is at the core of UCL's approach to global engagement. Now, partnership is a word that gets banded around really loosely, so to be a bit clearer about what we mean at UCL when we say partnership, we mean partnership of equivalence based on mutual trust and respect. When we are learning, the knowledge and benefits flow in both directions equally because being open to learning flowing in both directions, you must listen easily as much as you talk, it is absolutely critical. It doesn't work if one partner thinks they have all the answers, that's not a partnership, it's a transaction.

We believe that there is always more we can learn from each other by sharing ideas and being creative in solving problems together through collaboration. We are very proud of UCL because we believe that no single institution however prestigious is going to come up with all of the fair solutions to global challenges on its own. Global impacts and solutions to global challenges require us to work together and help each other. It seems to me that the collaboration between UCL and Njala University is a really good example of that kind of partnership. We also believe that there can be strategic programmes that can be a root to global impacts; specific projects or programmes which produce results that can change the lives of individuals and societies and economies. Often, those projects depend on a range of local partnerships, not only a single partner.

The overarching goal of this particular important international program SLURC is hosting today is to improve the lives and wellbeing of residents of informal settlements in Sierra Leone; helping the mayor whom we have just heard from to transform urban development in Freetown in particular by bringing together the best minds from Njala University, UCL, and national, local, and city authorities and from the residents themselves. Together we can effect transformation to relatively impact the lives of people like the 35% of people in Freetown who the mayor has said lived in informal settlements.

I had yesterday joint meetings with colleagues from SLURC, Vice Chancellor of Njala University, and the Deputy Minister to assess how much progress has been made in supporting policy development and co-creating solutions to issues of significant challenges here in Freetown. I also heard amazing things about your future plans to address these challenges. In particular, it was fantastic just before this conference started this morning to hear from Mayor Yvonne about how SLURC is contributing to her Transform Freetown plan. It is really inspiring to see the commitment from all sides – Njala University, the Deputy Minister and his team, SLURC and from my UCL colleagues to explore solutions through partnerships. At UCL we are really committed to working with Njala University and SLURC to support and explore closer engagement to co-create sustainable and lasting solutions to the emerging challenges that we all mankind care about. Working together in that way is key to future success. So, I am delighted to see this conference today exploring ways of doing just that.

I mentioned one of my former lives already when I worked for DFID in the UK. In another former life, I was British High Commissioner to Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland. As I was listening to Mayor Yvonne talking about *“we go further when we walk together”*, I learnt when I was in South Africa a proverb that comes from Africa – though a lot of African countries claim its origin, you must tell me if it originated from Sierra Leone. This proverb has a lot of meaning for me, it was *“If you want to walk fast, walk alone, if you want to walk far, walk together.”* I was thinking about that as I was listening to Fatmata speaking about when she had to run fast to avoid the bullets and machetes, sometimes you just have to run fast, but also, you need to walk or run together and I think that is what this conference is about. So, I am delighted to say this approach brought to life at SLURC through the work of Njala University and UCL and I thank you all for your time. I look forward to hearing some of the exciting outcomes from our collaborative research and policy development through the day. Thank you!”

#### **4. Professor Julio Davila - Head of Department, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL**

“Thank you, very much and good morning to everybody.

It is a real delight to be here. To me, it's a dream come true when Andrea [Rigon] came to me five years ago to create a centre in Sierra Leone. I was a bit terrified, but I'm really delighted that it worked so well. It is the creativity, charm, energy, and hospitality of our colleagues in Sierra Leone that have enabled this to work.

So, I wanted to thank in the name of the Bartlett – my faculty; Professor Alan Penn, the Dean of my faculty, and my colleagues at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit for all the hospitality we have been given, and the fantastic work that we have seen.

The words from Fatmata were quite moving and it is a tribute to the work that our colleagues have been doing. It's a voice that probably on other occasions would not have been heard, so thank you.

Briefly, this is one of several events that the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment is celebrating this year as we are celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the name “Bartlett” in honour of Sir Herbert Bartlett who was a donor and civil engineer. The faculty was named after him, but the faculty is much older than that. The architecture department was founded in 1841; UCL founded in 1826; the Bartlett School of Planning founded in 1914. We - the DPU - were founded 65 years ago and we have been in UCL since 1971. So, it's an old tradition, but one that has in UCL defined tradition and seeks to contribute to society and what could be more fitting is that the work that SLURC is doing defies all conventions by contributing to the well-being and advancement of humanity.

I will also like to share with you that we now ranked as the 1<sup>st</sup> Faculty of the Built Environment in the world. We are delighted to beat MIT for the first time. This is as a result of leadership first by Alan Penn, but also the extreme hard work of all my colleagues in the faculty. We are

**“SLURC IS PROVIDING THE  
EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON  
WHICH INFORMED DECISIONS  
AND POLICIES WILL BE MADE”**

**PROF ABDULAI MANSARAY**





also doing the work that we see here. It is that kind of engagement with local realities and partnerships that Nicola was actually mentioning.

I want to finalize by saying thank you again. it is an excellent conference ahead of us for the day and I am sure we all learn a lot and let's keep learning together. Thank you very much!"

##### **5. Dr Turad Senesie - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Technical and Higher Education**

"Members of the UCL team, senior academics, and members of the Njala University and University of Sierra Leone academic staff, agencies and organizations, SLURC team, ladies and gentlemen, good morning again.


The Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) is an institution established in partnership with Njala University and of course University College London. We have been told and having gone through literature that SLURC seeks to support better collaboration and impact of different actors and stakeholders of urban development and transformation in Sierra Leone by generating relevant data to inform discussions which ultimately will help to influence the larger national agenda to effect policy and decision making.

Before SLURC's establishment, Sierra Leone's higher education establishment's policy was failing to tackle urban development. That is a fact, because before now, as I said yesterday to the visiting team, our higher education institutions especially at the higher level have just been teaching centres rather than research orientated institutions. So, the coming of SLURC is timely within the context of rapid urban transformation which is disrupting communities. It may not be enough to merely hope for an inclusive community, but how well we position higher universities to pursue proactive roles in fostering and institutionalizing a better understanding of urbanization among and between academics, municipal authorities, politicians and urban residents themselves is what is very much important to us as a government and a nation.

The Ministry of Technical and Higher Education is encouraged by the bold step taken by SLURC to learn from the experiences of one of the leading global higher education institutions – Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL through a unique partnership model that embraced roles as pace makers, engines of economic development and centres for knowledge production which looks to inform policy making in the global south. The power to produce large change lies in capacity building within and across academic; city government and local communities empowered by new forms of urban networking and the commitment to an inclusive and sustainable urban development. As a government, we see today's urban transformation of informal settlements in Freetown as a platform where research institutions can genuinely create dialogue and debate among national stakeholders.

Addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience is one of the important pillars that we promised the people of this country as defined in the country's medium-term National Development Plan 2019-2023. The key aspiration of the government of Sierra Leone as articulated in the MTNDP framework 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 Sustainable Development Goal 11. In achieving this, we must promote the urban transformation agenda and enhance productive, healthy and peaceful cities that are well adapted to accommodating our growing population through the creation of employment opportunities.

This conference has assembled an impressive list of delegates to explore urban transformation especially for Freetown as well as the governance approach required for a wider urban development strategy. As a government, the decisions we take today will initiate the process and point out the actionable knowledge toward urban transformation as well as highlighting the various success stories. This conference provides us golden opportunity to support the various tertiary institutions to learn from the experience of the partnership between Njala University and UCL. How do we achieve our collective goal of a transformative,

A woman with short brown hair and glasses is speaking into a microphone at a wooden podium. She is wearing a black blazer over a colorful, abstract patterned top and a pearl necklace. The background is a light-colored wall with some faint, colorful graphics. The text is overlaid on the lower part of the image.

**“WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS ALWAYS  
MORE WE CAN LEARN FROM EACH  
OTHER BY SHARING IDEAS AND BEING  
CREATIVE IN SOLVING PROBLEMS  
TOGETHER THROUGH COLLABORATION”**

**DAME NICOLA BREWER**



equitable and inclusive development of our beloved country is a responsibility placed on all of us as Sierra Leoneans and our colleagues coming from UCL. I am sure the research and evidence-based analysis which will be presented here today will enhance our understanding on how we can transform our urban space into a prosperous one. As a government, we therefore want to encourage SLURC and its partners to continue this kind of informed policy dialogue and advocacy process.

On the other hand, I want to encourage government officials present here today and development partners to be included not only as partners, but as a leading institution in critically shaping urban transformation in Sierra Leone. We hope that the UCL and Njala University successful partnership model will create a concrete step in sustaining this through curriculum development, urban development to fill the manpower gap; and also, to UCL to expand the partnership beyond Njala University to embrace other tertiary institutions across Sierra Leone. University of Sierra Leone is here; we have the Northern University and the Eastern University. I think UCL should extend a partnership to those institutions. On that note, ladies and gentlemen, I want to make it clear here that as a responsible government, we stand ready to give support to this kind of partnerships across the board as we believe that research is the backbone to national policy design and implementation, and we rely on these institutions to provide us with the relevant data for national development. Thank you very much!"

**“THE WORK THAT SLURC IS DOING DEFIES ALL CONVENTIONS BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING AND ADVANCEMENT OF HUMANITY”.**

**PROFESSOR JULIO DAVILA**



## 3.0 Session One:

### Urban Health in Transition: Integrating the Health needs of Informal Settlement into Planning

This session was structured as a combination of presentation and plenary discussion involving key stakeholders in the health sector who served as discussants. They reflected on the presentation and responded to questions and comments from the audience.

The presenters were Dr. Annie Wilkinson (Institute for Development Studies) and Abu Conteh (SLURC), and the discussants were Dr. Anthony Augustine Sandi (Deputy Health Minister), Dr. Ansumana Sillah (Director of Environmental Health, Ministry of Health) and Salimatu Kanu (Health Worker, Portee-Rokupa). The discussion was moderated by Braima Koroma.

### 3.1 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

The presentation on integrating the health needs of informal settlements into planning covers a rich content on the health and policy context in Sierra Leone; overview of SLURC's urban health research; findings of ongoing work and policy implications.

The health and policy context in Sierra Leone pinpointed the following:

- Urban is not considered and there is nothing on informal settlements in the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (2017-2021) or National Health Promotion Plan (2017-2021).
- Considerable effort is being made in the National Development Plan (2019-2023) and the Transform Freetown Plan to integrate urban informal settlements.
- Imbalance between government spending on prevention versus spending on curative services. E.g. Sanitation 0.2% of GDP versus health allocation 11.1% of GDP (MTNDP 2019-2023 & WHO)
- Donor spending in health significantly higher than other sectors.

The presenters noted that SLURC's health research projects aim at filling the evidence gaps from the following findings:

- Knowledge base on urban health is limited.
- No systematic study of health determinants and risks in informal settlements.
- Absence of engagement with residents of informal settlements about their health-related priorities, beliefs and experiences.

The presenters showcased how residents in informal settlements respond to health-related issues from reliance on a range of informal care options including drug peddlers to traditional healers. It further revealed a collective action for strategies for health which centres around community-based action and social organisation, self provision and co-production of health-related services.

The presentation concluded with a quest for accountability for health equity and some policy implications and questions which set the stage for the discussion session. Some of the policy implications and questions that are worthy to be discussed are:

- Can urban accountability mechanisms be developed for improved health? Who are the key stakeholders? What are their roles, responsibilities and priorities?
- How can local action be supported? Which groups and intermediaries can represent informal settlements and their diverse populations and needs?
- How can multi-sectoral planning for health be promoted? Can informal settlements and their health be integrated into non-health plans and policies i.e. National Spatial Development Plan, Freetown Structure Plan?
- How can lessons be shared across Freetown and other urban settings in Sierra Leone?



19 June 2019 British Council,



**DR TURAD SENESIE**

## 3.2 DISCUSSANTS' REFLECTIONS ON PRESENTATION

At the end of the presentation, discussants commented on some of the key issues presented as follows:

1. *Salimatu Kanu (Health Worker, Portee-Rokupa)*
  - She noted that, there is inadequate supply of water, drugs and having the appropriate infrastructure to discharge their duties as health practitioners is a key challenge.
  - Recommended the creation of byelaws to mitigate Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), whom she perceived poses a major challenge to effective practice.
2. *Dr Ansumana Sillah (Director of Environmental Health, Ministry of Health)*
  - He commented on the need for evidence-based approach in the health sector and commended SLURC's work in urban research
  - Highlighted the six building blocks of the ministry which cover several areas of intervention as thus:
    - *Leadership & Governance* - deals with policies, byelaws on public health and health system strengthening.
    - *Health Financing* – covers programs like free healthcare for under fives and lactating mothers.
    - *Human Resources for Health* – deals with recruitment of health practitioners. He noted that the ministry has now embarked on a decentralization drive which has enhanced the recruitment of health practitioners in rural areas as compared to when recruitment was centralized to Freetown over the years.
    - *Medical Products* – enhance control around importing and dissemination of medical products. Current challenges are drug peddling and counterfeiting.
    - *Service Delivery* – Assess the quality of health care service delivery to citizens.
    - *Health Management Information systems* - The need for data to inform decision making in the health sector.
3. *Dr. Anthony Augustine Sandi (Deputy Health Minister)*
  - He started by addressing the issue of byelaws raised by Salimatu Kanu - health worker. He noted that byelaws should be made by community level stakeholders which should be in line with the national health policy framework.
  - Government has started a framework to decentralise health professionals. At recruitment level, interviews are being conducted at district levels. This will increase efficiency and upscaled service delivery.
  - Government has increased efficiency in drug distribution. Drugs are distributed quarterly to regional headquarters and local stakeholders and the public are invited to witness the delivery process to enhance public accountability and trust.
  - Poor service delivery is still a challenge to the health sector. He appeals to health practitioners to increase awareness at community level. The act of people diagnosing themselves and heavy reliance on drug peddlers and traditional healers greatly affects health care service delivery.





DR ANSUMANA SILLAH

## 4.0 Session Two: From Disaster Risk Management to Urban Resilience

With the same structure as in session one, this session was presented by Dr. Emmanuel Osuteye (DPU), and Braima Koroma (SLURC); the discussants were Yirah O. Conteh (FEDURP) and John Vandy Rogers (ONS).

### 4.1 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

This presentation was largely centred around risk management and how informal settlers can cope with and navigate their way around those risks, ultimately resulting in a resilient Freetown. To elucidate why focusing on risks, Dr Osuteye noted that “... *much of the urban poor in Freetown live in risk-prone areas and are systematically exposed to a wide range of preventable health hazards and periodic small-scale disasters.*” These and many other issues affecting informal communities are the premises for SLURC’s intervention, he exclaimed.

The presenter transitioned to showcasing the work SLURC and DPU have been doing on risk management. From the SLURC/DPU co-learning alliance where they worked with informal communities in Cockle Bay, Susan’s Bay and five other communities; conducting research based activities including transect walks to map physical conditions in those settlements; interviews with key stakeholders and local community members; household surveys; focus group discussions, to action -planning workshops. These activities have enabled SLURC and DPU to provide evidence for future programming on informal settlements.

In moving from diagnosis to action, the presenters highlighted areas that are key parameters to achieving effective risk and disaster management and sustained livelihood in informal settlements. Among those are:

- *Cooperative disaster risk reduction:* This involves building up collective solutions that address the root causes of risks and strengthening local networks to prepare, prevent and recover from disaster events.
- *Environmental rehabilitation:* The roles communities can play in safeguarding vital ecosystems that support the life and economy of Freetown now and into the future
- *Tenure security:* This enhance the capacity of the urban poor to improve the settlements where they live and sustain their livelihoods.
- *Household-based upgrading:* In the landlord - tenant relationship, this involves the provision of incentives for tenants to undertake improvements in housing and basic services.
- *Community-led upgrading:* This occurs when residents take a lead in planning, developing and managing existing and new services such as toilets, drainage, water points and solid waste collection.

### 4.2 DISCUSSANTS REFLECTIONS ON PRESENTATION

At the end of the presentation, discussants commented on some of the key issues presented as follows:

#### 1. Yirah Conteh (FEDURP)

- The presentation resonates with firsthand experiences of the daily challenges around risk, hazards and vulnerabilities that informal settlers face. To complement the work of government and other partners, the federation has established a disaster management unit to work collaborative on prevention and response to disasters in informal communities. They have already established 52 Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs)
- He commended SLURC for taking a bottom-top approach in bringing communities together to address their needs
- Though informal settlers are risk trapped, he believed that the mantra of empowering slum dwellers to effectively respond to and mitigate those risks is “taking slums from the people and not people from the slum.” This denotes addressing the needs of informal settlers













**DR. EMMANUEL OSUTEYE**



rather than forceful relocation or repatriation.

- He concluded by soliciting more collaboration from the central government as planning alone is not enough, but inclusivity in implementation will yield positive outcomes.

2. *John Vandy Rogers (ONS)*

- He called for the need for local knowledge to build into scientific knowledge to enhance better intervention in informal communities.
- Data management is essential, he exclaimed. Quality data ensure an avenue for assessment of risks and vulnerabilities.
- Understanding behavioral patterns is a vital consideration in dealing with vulnerabilities in informal settlements. The activities of up stream people negatively affect low stream (coastal) settlements. Negative interaction with the environment through deforestation, improper disposal of solid waste etc promotes the level of risk and vulnerabilities in informal communities

## 5.0 Summary of Morning Session

A summary of the morning session which comprises the first two presentations – urban health and disaster risk and management, and reflections from discussants by Dr. Joseph Macarthy. The following are the key takeaways from the morning session:

### Urban health

- Issues around maternal and child health are still very high in informal settings
- Environmental and sanitation related issues are the underlying factors of the health risks that exists in informal communities.
- While there are some levels of support for informal settlements, the social support seems to be limited.
- The Deputy Minister's contribution shows that the Ministry of Health is very much aware of these constraints and that they are putting certain measures in place to respond to them. One of those measures is the recruitment and decentralization of health workers to ensure effective service delivery across the country.
- Salimatu's submission calls for more support from government to upscale health service delivery especially toward maternal child health in informal settlements
- The question of how accountability can improve health system strengthening opens avenue for more research and evidence-based approach in addressing health concerns in informal settlements.

### Disaster, risks and management

- From the findings of the studies presented, we realized that while risks exist in most of the informal settlements, something can be done to manage them. Risks exists in various stages from low, medium to high, and several people are already trapped in them, thus enhancing their vulnerability and exposure. However, whilst people continue to live in those risk traps; they have the capacity to act.
- There are several actions that can be taken to help communities build their resilience. These include understanding the current conditions of risk and co-developing strategies on risk and disaster management.
- Partners appreciated the work of SLURC in working with informal community members, who must be part of the solution in addressing issues affecting them.
- There is a need for a collaborative approach among government and private institutions in addressing risks in informal settlements.

## 5.1 Q & A on Morning Session

**Participant:** To what extent does the political economy play a part in enhancing development in informal settlements?

**Panelist:** Dr. Andrea Rigon agreed that the political economy has an immense influence in enhancing development in informal settlements. He noted that, from SLURC's perspective, the focus of the research - synergies between formal and informal sectors in the Freetown economy is to produce knowledge to inform livelihood strategy development in Freetown by documenting key informal livelihood sectors; exploring the importance of livelihoods in informal settlements for 'city prosperity'; understanding how social identities, including gender and age, affect livelihoods; and exploring the spatial dimensions of livelihoods. However, he conceded that the research does not detail the role of the political economy in enhancing development in informal settlements.

**Participant:** What is government doing to mitigate migration which is a major factor to the rise of informal settlements in urban areas?

**Panelist:** The Deputy Minister of Health noted that the challenges posed by rural to urban migration is at the centre of the national development framework of the government and the ongoing decentralization drive – ensuring that basic services are readily available in provincial areas and a mean of reducing rural poverty is the key to mitigating rural to urban migration. Also, the continued coordination and collaboration with partner agencies like SLURC to provide evidence on urbanization is a mean to mitigating rural to urban migration.

**Participant:** What is the role of the private sector in addressing the problems highlighted in the presentations about informal settlements?

**Panelist:** Engineer Jones replied to this question from an engineering/role of engineers' perspective. He said that they liaised with government in the events of disasters, participated in Public Private Partnerships (P3s) on construction projects like building bridges. Mostly, the role of the private sectors in addressing the problems in informal settlements is not visible to the public, but the background work like providing professional advice to government and commitment to their corporate social responsibilities yield positive outcome, he concluded.

**Participant:** Whats your take on the use of local remedies by people in informal settlements?

**Panelist:** Salimatu Kanu (health worker) replied that in the community which she practices, people have preferences for, and they use local remedies especially for common cold. She further commented that local remedies are mostly readily available and there is a need for regulation on the use of local remedies as it may result to serious health implications.

**Participant:** What chances exist for informal settlements to be formalized?

**Panelist:** 50-50 chance, replied Yirah Conteh (FEDURP). There are 72 informal settlements in Freetown and the constraints in those settlements are visible. For instance, the lack of accessible roads in these settlements inhibits the implementation of effective response strategies in disaster management. Also, lack of political will in formalizing informal settlements deter other organizations to respond to risks in informal settlements, he emphasized.

**Participant:** How will government utilize the outputs from research institutions?

**Panelist:** The Deputy Minister noted that government is making good use of the outputs provided by SLURC and other research institutions. These outputs are utilized by the Office of Performance Planning and Implementation, and Ministries of Land and Health. It usually takes a while to be implemented, but ultimately, when implemented it aid the national development agenda of the government.



## 6.0 Session Three:

### Synergies Between Formal and Informal Livelihood Sectors in the Freetown Economy

This session was presented by Dr. Andrea Rigon (DPU), Sudie Austina Sellu and Braima Koroma (SLURC). The discussants were Jenneh Gbao (BRAC) and Abdul Karim Marah (FCC).

#### 6.1 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

SLURC, in partnership with DPU undertook a research on understanding the synergies between formal and informal livelihood sectors in four communities in Freetown, namely: Cockle Bay, Dworzark, Moyiba and Portee /Rokupa. Two case studies on livelihood activities were presented – stone quarrying in Moyiba and Dworzark (Hillside communities) and fishing activities in Cockle Bay and Portee/Rokupa (Coastal communities).

The presentation opened with a conceptual definition of formal and informal livelihood sectors and the nexus between the two sectors. With formal often considered “*rule based, structures, explicit and predictable*” and informal “*referring to beyond the reach of official governance processes*”; these connotations are often problematic from an analytical perspective because what is called formal and informal are intrinsically linked, and there is no clear cut distinction between the two sectors.

For better conceptualization of livelihood activities in the research, Dr Andrea Rigon defined livelihood system as “*systems that characterise the settlements, that employ large numbers, especially of poorer residents, inclusion of sectors that both women and men work in...*” Thus, to produce scientifically rigorous findings on informal livelihoods, the study methodology includes scoping of secondary data, a pilot workshop to trial methods with Freetown urban practitioners including BRAC, CODOHSAPA and many more, Focus Group Discussions, individual time diaries and life histories.

To understand the value chain in this informal livelihood study, the researchers concentrated on two main activities – stone quarrying and fishing and they mapped out the gender roles inherent in those activities. Some of the key groups in the stone quarrying and fishing livelihood systems were highlighted as thus:

##### Stone Quarrying

- Stone Extractors: Mostly men on low incomes who utilise limited assets like hammers and shovels to execute their work
- Stone Breakers 1: Mainly younger men, often students working after school hours with medium sized hammers.
- Stone Breakers 2: Mostly women and children who utilized small hammers, head pans and shovels to execute their work
- Contractors: Mostly men who have capital and contacts to enhance the stone trade.

##### Fishing:

- Fishermen: Low income men and aged between 15-52. They need skills, logistics (fishing gear) and healthy bodies to execute their tasks.
- Fish Smokers: Low income women whom are mainly supported by men. They need smoking shed, wood, kerosene etc.
- Agents: Mainly middle-income women who are often related to the boat owners but may work for other fishermen. They need phone, networks and capital to perform their roles.
- Boat Owners: These are higher income men and women. They also need capital to stay afloat in business.

In both cases, the key characteristic of informal livelihood that emerged reveals a very structured chains with a complex organization and governance which has developed over many years. Also, labour intensiveness and how activities evolving with the growth and expansion of the city were discussed.

The major finding of the research which became a subject of intensive discussion is time poverty and financial poverty. The study reveals that women work more, rest less and are more at risk in the informal livelihood sector. Questions around the means of alleviating the status of women in the informal livelihood sector became the premise of discussion between discussants and participants.

The presentation ended by highlighting the various contributions made by the informal livelihood sectors to the formal economy amongst which are:

- It provides employment, particularly labour-intensive activities with ease of entry for the very poor.
- It creates strong networks of trust and mutual assistance.
- It contributes to build a social protection of last resort.
- It delivers key economic contribution to the city particularly in the absence of state capacity to adequately regulate and promote economic activities.

## 6.2 DISCUSSANTS' REFLECTIONS ON PRESENTATION

At the end of the presentation, discussants commented on some of the key issues presented as follows:

1. Dr Andrea Rigon (DPU)
  - He emphasized that there is a mutual relationship between the informal and formal sectors with both sectors benefiting from the activities of each other. Also, there is no clear-cut definitional distinction between the term formal and informal. He noted that the faulty definition of those terms limits how people perceive informal livelihoods.
2. Sudie Austina Sellu (SLURC)
  - She commented on gender roles especially on the findings which revealed that women work more, rest less and are more at risk in the informal livelihood sector. She maintained that women are constrained and challenged by time and financial poverty and more needs to be done to alleviate their position in the social and economic strata.
  - Empowering women through skills acquisitions and capacity building is key in enhancing the development of women in the informal livelihood sector.
  - She called for collective actions among NGOs and all partners working on informal settlements.











## 7.0 SESSION FOUR:

### Planning the Freetown Urban Space: From Policy to Action

Dr. Alexandre Apsan Frediani (DPU), Dr Joseph Macarthy and Sulaiman Foday Kamara (SLURC) served as presenters in this session, while Francis Reffell (CODOHSAPA), Abdul Karim Marah (FCC) and Dr. Alphajor Cham (MLHE) served as discussants.

#### 7.1 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

This presentation focuses mainly on research on the roadmap to planning the Freetown Urban Space with special consideration to the development and implementation of the Community Action Area Plans (CAAPs). The presentation covers how suited CAAPs are to meeting the challenges of planning the Freetown urban space, the legal and policy context around planning, the study methodology, and the key findings that emanated from the study.

Dr Macarthy noted that it is becoming public knowledge that there are key challenges to planning Freetown to meet the standards of contemporary urban cities in the developing world. Among those challenges are:

- 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 and poor and inadequate services.
- Sprawling and the explosion of slums with 35% of all residents in Freetown living in overcrowded and underserviced slums.
- Severe shortage in knowledge about the conditions in which people live and the lack of capacity of the different stakeholder dealing with the urban challenges.

In mitigating these challenges, the presenter highlighted the need for robust and inclusive policies and planning strategies. He mentioned some urban planning and land policies which are vital to the urban planning process. These policies include Freetown Improvement Act and Rules, Cap 66 (1960) which provides technical rules to guide housing development in the city; Freetown Structure Plan (2014) that proposes a range of actions to enable Freetown to capably deal with its rapid and uncontrolled growth process; the National Land Policy and its Implementation plan (2015); the Transform Freetown Agenda and the National Development Plan (2019-2023) which recognises urban and informal settlements but with no clear plan to deal with the issues.

With much focus on the CAAP approach which is “*an action research-led methodology that consists of a series of workshops and seminars examining socio-spatial urban dynamics, and uses participatory design and planning to support and advocate for more democratic forms of city making*”; the methodology was structured around four scales – home, community, city and policy and planning.

To assess how suited the CAAP methodology is to addressing the planning of the Freetown urban space, the researchers developed a research question “*What is the role of the CAAP in expanding the capabilities of informal settlement dwellers to participate in city-making processes?*” The findings that emanated from this approach reveal participatory opportunities in enabling planning literacy, helping planning to move sideways, and helping planning to move downwards as well as upwards.

Further, the presentation concluded with a highlight of the potential of the CAAP methodology which includes:

- While the CAAP can be applied in any community at the local level, this study focuses on informal settlements.
- It 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.
- It enhances 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.

## **7.2 DISCUSSANTS' REFLECTIONS ON PRESENTATION**

At the end of the presentation, discussants commented on some of the key issues presented as follows:

1. Abdul Karim Marah (FCC)
  - He noted that the CAAP approach is similar to the Transform Freetown agenda utilized by the Freetown City Council. As a participatory approach, it helps to map out service gaps, needs assessments and validates the views of informal settlers in the decision-making process.
2. Dr Alphajor Cham (MLHE)
  - He acknowledged the gaps in urban land and planning policies. Most policies have not been able to fully address the needs of slum settlers in relation to enhancing urbanization and land tenureship. He emphasized that the increase in slums from 43 - 72 depending on the source of data, clearly showing that government and partners have not been able to maintain urbanization.
  - He concluded by commending the CAAP approach as a viable framework to enhance effective planning of the Freetown urban space.
3. Francis Reffell (CODOHSAPA)
  - He agreed with the CAAP methodology as an effective means to meeting the challenges of urban planning
  - An inclusive approach is a practice and not an assertion, therefore agencies working on informal settlement must include the settlers themselves in addressing their challenges. Agencies have been leading the advocacy for slum dwellers, but now, the reverse is occurring with slum dwellers advocating for themselves, he concluded.

## 8.0 Summary of Afternoon Session

A summary of the afternoon session which comprised the last two presentations – Synergies Between Formal and Informal Livelihood Sectors and Planning the Freetown Urban Space: From Policy to Action

and reflections from discussants was done by Braima Koroma. The following are the key takeaways from the afternoon session:

### Urban Livelihoods

- The urban livelihood research highlighted some problematic issues surrounding the informal livelihood sector in regard to value chains, difference in gender roles and responsibilities – the engagement of women in key sectors with higher work rate and less personal time. The need for women to be in strategic roles not only as retailers but also deeply involved in key activities was emphasized.
- Issues around how the livelihood sector had been organized in terms of its wider complex nature and networks, and the impact of trade in the informal economy, were discussed.
- The need for regulations in consolidating the various community governance structures in the informal livelihood sector was a major theme that emanated from the presentation.
- The relevance of informal livelihood and its connection to the formal livelihood cannot be underemphasized. Presenters and discussants agreed that activities around the informal livelihood sector contribute greatly to the formal economy. They further emphasized that there is a thin line between both the informal and formal economies and because activities in both economies are intertwined, people can benefit from both.
- There was a call for coordination and collective actions to strengthening policies on informal livelihood especially around labour exploitation of women was highlighted.

### Planning the Freetown Urban Space

- One of the key challenges in urban planning around Freetown is the existence of unprogressive laws and policies. Some of those outdated policies and laws cannot fit within the current urban development drive, thereby mitigating the effort of actors to effectively implement reforms for sustainable urban planning initiatives.
- In response to the broader challenges of urban planning, policy initiatives like the Community Action Area Plans (CAAP), which are closely linked to the Transform Freetown agenda and the Mid Term National Development Plan, are viable initiatives that will contribute to the attaining of effective planning of the Freetown urban space.
- One of the key findings of the urban planning research reveals an incremental benefit from the wider CAAP process which has set an invaluable precedent in showcasing how community led processes can possibly be articulated to city wide planning initiatives.
- With regard to the assessment of unprogressive policies, the presenters revealed that government has been failing in addressing some of the key urban challenges, but there are ongoing reforms more specifically in relation to land and the National Urban Policy which will address the challenges around informal settlements, and the recognition of the Community Action Area Plan.

## 8.1 Q & A on Afternoon Session

**Participant:** To what extent can we enhance the interaction between the informal and formal sectors in developing productivity of the overall formal economy?

**Panelist:** Dr Andrea Rigon noted that the first step through policies should be the recognition of the roles of the informal sector in the overall formal economy. Policies should recognize that there is a strong interaction between the formal and informal sector and that interaction is the backbone of the formal economy. In terms of productivity, there is projection to increase productivity in a lot of sectors around informal livelihoods, but not at the expense of labour. Increasing productivity in most sector means changing the technology to make the sector less labour intensive which will enable a lot of people to lose their livelihood. He concluded







by advocating for alternative livelihoods in the informal sector as the quest for increasing productivity continues.

**Participant:** Now that there is data showing the challenges women faced in the informal livelihood sector, what will SLURC do to address those challenges?

**Panelist:** Sudie Austina Sellu replied by saying that SLURC is a research based rather than an implementing institution. This means that the institution provides evidence through scientifically rigorous methodologies which can be used by implementing partners to provide effective intervention in informal settlements. Even though SLURC doesn't implement directly, yet they work with consortia and thereby provide valuable contribution to the work of those consortiums in implementing programs tailored to meet the needs of people in informal communities, she concluded.

## 9.0 Commentary on Afternoon Table Discussion

Since written questions were placed on each table, participants were expected to brainstorm and provide brief responses to those questions. This commentary captures participants responses as follows:

Question:

1. *How can policies consider the key role that informal livelihoods play in the wellbeing of those involved and the entire city?*

Responses:

Table 1:

- Government should develop and enact policies that recognise the needs of the people; regulate prices of products emanating from informal communities; foster the formation of stronger unions; provide access to loans for informal settlers and enhanced capacity building of citizens to maximize their potentials in sustaining their livelihoods.

Table 2:

- Policies should serve as a security for the planning of urban settlements. This will ensure that communities are secured and safely managed.

Table 3:

- Government at all points of the policy process needs to involve stakeholders and local knowledge to ensure that the policies provide solutions that are tailored to the needs of the people.

Table 4:

- We have learnt that “*informality is not illegality*” and as long as the informal sector plays a great role in the formal economy of the city, there is need for informal settlers to be empowered by providing access to resources and capacity building.

Table 5:

- Defining policies has to do with what we can accept, mitigate and what can ultimately benefit the greater percentage of the citizenry. In summation, effective policies should capture the interest of the people when implemented

Table 6:

- Policies should recognise the role of informal settlements and should also consider the regularization of activities in the informal livelihood sector.

Table 7:

- Government should work on employment creation by recognising the type of jobs available and matching the skill sets of people to meet those jobs. They should also recognise the contribution of the informal sector to the formal economy; engage with local stakeholders to share their knowledge about informal livelihoods; and the polices should be sensitive to the needs of the urban poor.



Question:

2. *Considering the chaos and lack of service delivery, which level of planning do you think will be more ideal to serve the needs and aspiration of the urban poor?*

Responses:

Table 1:

- Planning occurs in three levels. National planning deals with comprehensive planning where goals and objectives are made on the premise of statistical data. Regional planning includes a more specialized planning as it deals with activities within a specific area. Local planning concentrates on detailed planning which is developed and implemented by the local people who are familiar with their needs, and thus create measures to address those needs. To us, the ideal level of planning is the local level of planning since it addresses the needs of people effectively.

Table 2:

- The best form of planning is community level of planning. Community planning is best suited to effectively serve the needs and aspirations of the urban poor. It enhances the incorporation of the views and thought of the people who will be affected by the policies, therefore, if they are included at community level it will serve them best.

Table 3:

- There can be chaos because the people are confused. *"What is for the slums, without the slums, is not for the slums at all..."* means that planning has always been at the top level that is why the people are confused. To enhance effective planning, the bottom -top approach should be adopted wherein *informal* settlers should be consulted in all levels of the planning process, as they understand their needs better and are best suited to provide solutions to their challenges.

Table 4:

- Planning that embrace inclusivity in all forms is the best approach to planning. We agreed to the bottom-top approach to planning.

## 10.0 Closing Remarks:

### 10.1 Dr Joseph Sherman-Kamara (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Njala University)

“As we close today’s remarkable conference on Urban Transformations, I must register my profound thanks and appreciation to all actors for their support in making this event a success. From our partnership with University College London (UCL), we have seen how research can flow from universities to communities, while we move away from how research is being kept in some dusty cupboard somewhere. The two-way flow will benefit both institutions and will be reinforced in our current partnership. This will provide justifications for us to keep our engagement with UCL so that the benefits derived from this partnership will flow and provide context to the operation of Njala University and the rest of Sierra Leone.

Because our major institutions worked together these days, we can only ensure that these benefits will flow across higher education institutions. Specifically, when we have these engagements in the field of education, as we prepare ourselves to service the manpower needs of our schools, polytechnics, and universities throughout the country with the establishment of the centre for pedagogical excellence. We will work with UCL to address certain capacity challenges as we move towards mainstreaming SLURC’s operations across the country. This is a necessary step; this will be the logical next step we must take to ease the pain of urbanization. We also want to leverage the key strengths of UCL to help build a stronger university through staff and students exchanges, and other arrangements that will be of mutual benefits.

Let me thank all the presenters for their amazing work and the participants here today for being very cooperative and active throughout the process. I want to thank particularly those who prepare presentations to share with us. Personally, I wish to acknowledge the aspect of urban development dynamics, migration risks – as we migrate from risks to resilience; that could be a very difficult journey, but it is a journey we must make.

Institutions like FEDURP, may not be so frustrated if we have a successful transition for organization processes. The Sierra Leone formal and informal sectors must regularize resources, and the attractions of resilience opportunities needs to be exploited. Planning the Freetown urban space for its growing population is an obvious thing. With the strengths we’ve acquired through our links with UCL, we are very hopeful that these logical steps will be less painful. We wish to learn from this process by creating the participatory space for co-learning, research and community development across the urban space. From what I have heard today, it sounds as if through the co-learning opportunities we could use “*one stone to kill three birds*.” Our institutions are supposed to promote planning, research and community service and with that participatory space, I see all of these three mandates being executed.

I want to thank you all for your participation!”

### 10.2 Prof. Ijeoma Uchegbu (Pro-Vice Provost for Africa and the Middle East, UCL)

“Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak. I’ve had a kind of fantastic few days in Sierra Leone. I have learnt so much about SLURC’s Programme and I will like you to take time out to really give SLURC a huge round of applause.

I think this is a fantastic model of two universities working across geographical borders, but not just working across geographical borders, but also involving the community that they wished to work with and involving them at a high level. And finally incorporating the different areas of government who have the power to change lives.

I think this is a fantastic model and it actually shows that it does work. I was struck by the testimony of Fatmata this morning. It showed how really challenging these lives are and it makes us all understand why we are doing what we are doing. So, its great to do top level







research, but it is even better to research that has impact. Impact is there when the mayor talked about “*NO More Floods*” based on SLURC’s data. I think this is amazing and the impact is there when Alex talked about a bridge being built in order to link two communities and that brings me to the end to say that a bridge has been built between UCL and Njala University. That bridge is SLURC; that bridge has been built across human geography, social sciences, economics and the bridge is also being extended into the arms of government.

So, I am really really proud to come from a university that has contributed to this. I look forward to seeing what more SLURC can do and I want to come back and hear that the informal settlements are now living joyously and having a fantastic lives.

Thank you so much!”

### **10.3 Dr Joseph Macarthy (Executive Director, SLURC)**

“Good afternoon again, I have this honourable responsibility to contribute to the closing remarks, even as I gave the opening remarks today. Essentially, I am very much delighted that this particular conference has been realized especially in terms of its essence.

I want to recognize especially the role of the DPU and UCL in general for taking time out to give us the necessary support, and to also help to establish us as an organization that has to respond to some of the issues that continue to confront us as a country. I am delighted that Njala University was very much willing to provide that particular base, and therefore we find our essence within that particular institution to play this vital role.

SLURC is very ready and we continue to make ourselves a lot relevant. I am very much delighted that a lot of people have given up their various responsibilities to be with us today. To me, this is testament to the fact that a lot of people are now growing to understand the issues that we continue to confront as a nation; and we have no more time to sit by, but to continue to take actions. So, in my view, we have enriched our understandings, and we now have the responsibility to move the process forward.

In Sierra Leone, we really require human capacity especially to not only do research, but to ensure that we take the necessary action to bring about the kind of transformation we need. We have no other time but now. Planning education is really of essence, and a lot of what we are doing at the moment and what we have to do possibly will be very essential in taking this discussion forward. This will also help in building the kind of capacity – especially the human capacity that we require for the development of our country.

Much of the discussion here are centred so much around social justice in terms of emphasizing that people in informal settlements also have the right to live. We cannot continue to have our cities just flooded with humans without any proper economic opportunities being provided. So, the discussion here is also about how do we promote economic transformation in our country to ensure that we create the kind of space as well as opportunities for people in our cities and towns to live and have the lives and future they deserved.

I believed that this particular conference has laid that platform. So, without much ado, I will want to say thank you to all of you in different ways as you took time to participate in this program.”

# Annex:

1. **Conference Programme:**  
<https://www.slurc.org/urban-transformations-in-sierra-leone.html>
2. **Presentations: Please access all presentations and related outputs on the SLURC website** <https://www.slurc.org/urban-transformations-in-sierra-leone.html>
3. **Table questions:**
  - Morning session:**
    - a) What are feasible first steps to support informal settlements to move towards sustained and scalable improvements in health?
    - b) What actions need to/can be undertaken by the different actors responsible/ involved to move from risk mitigation towards a just and resilience Freetown?
  - Afternoon session:**
    - a) How can policies consider the key role that informal livelihoods play for the wellbeing of those involved and for the entire city?
    - b) Considering the chaos and lack of service delivery, which level of planning do you think will be more ideal to serve the needs and aspiration of the urban poor.
4. **Media publications on the outcome of the conference:**  
<https://www.slurc.org/media.html>
5. **Spoken word presentation:**

## **LIFE IN THE SLUMS...STILL I RISE (by Fatmata Shour)**

Mother came to the city with me and my four brothers through a wood van,  
 We stopped half way to Freetown and walked and ran,  
 with a sound ban, ban, ban, began, pan pan....

The very scary sounds of gun firing.... Chasing us with bullets and machete.....  
 I saw children's hands being cut off..... full of petty, gutty and sweaty.  
 We ran faster than a car ...to avoid being amputated, ...by God, we ran far.

After many days of walking through the day light and the night, which sometimes made  
 no difference,  
 as a day that should be bright would be seen dark, clouded;  
 We arrived in the city; it was a relieve to have reached the city, but yeah....  
 we thought things would be brighter for us...  
 once again... but that was a dream that never came to pass.

What followed...a long time of struggles, of suffering, and pain,  
 sleepless nights and empty stomach..... nothing gained  
 we had nowhere to sleep, no food to eat,  
 Sleeping in a field was our first and only choice  
 or was it to find a place rich people don't wish to stay..... they avoid  
 That was what brought us to what people called the ghetto, tenement, poverty-stricken,  
 crowded, low neighbourhood, cheap housing, a garbage patch, Hunter's point, the wrong  
 side of the track,  
 And popularly... known to all as 'slum'....  
 But for us it was Heaven, a place where we found the peace that lacked....

Today, the catchall term "slum" is loose and deprecatory,  
 it has many connotations and meanings that persist,



and is seldom used by the more sensitive, politically correct, and academically rigorous, yet still ...they exist

A second war began for us, in a place closer to the river, where rubbishes are being emptied,  
a war with mosquitoes, flies, rats and pigs,  
Flooding, no proper school, no proper health service, no proper planning.... We don't have homes in slums but houses,  
for our focus is survival, finding ways and means .....  
to put food on the table like Konsho beans...  
they can make you go for a day, or even until the next day

People recognize you by the way you talk and act,  
that simply tells them where you are coming from,  
"Ugh, you smell like someone coming from the slum"

You are nothing in the eyes of people living in the brand and well-structured communities you see,  
for as long as you are living in the slum, even if you are the next President or First Lady to be.

I'm only fortunate to see my honorable or any government stakeholder in time for election, after? No one cares about us, ...it feels like rejection.  
We are being extracted from being a citizen but we have a right to light, life to shine, to rise.....

Living in such communities can kill great dreams and breaks in pieces what seems...a possibility.  
Please let me find my level here in the slum, that's where I belong "for liquid finds their level".

BUT ...for all I care I'm a strong woman and I can rise up,  
Powerful leaders of tomorrow... wake up, wise up  
Don't let our future break down

Let our voices be heard,  
Because we care about our communities,  
Encourage and help us to go and fulfill our dreams and ambition,  
Because our vision....  
It's what makes us visible.

The greatest hope I have is to go back to my slum community,  
to help them stand strong,  
walk together to change that page  
and build a better life for all of us... to reach that stage.

For life in the slums...still we rise.



