From ‘risk traps’ to a just and resilient Freetown

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Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone:  
Lessons from SLURC's research in Freetown  
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The majority 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. Risk accumulation or ‘risk traps’ impose severe impacts on the everyday life, livelihoods and assets of the urban poor, as well as the environmental and socioeconomic future of Freetown.

But, risk path-dependency does not need to be path-determinacy.

In-situ rehabilitation is possible and requires building upon the enormous capacity & resources mobilized by local communities to make their settlements safe and to live a dignified life.
Community-led knowledge on risk accumulation in 15 informal settlements

ReMapRisk Freetown online platform

SLURC as a city-wide observatory of risk accumulation

Action-plans co-designed and implemented by local communities in 15 settlements
In 2017/18 and 2018/19 we worked in alliance with local communities in: Cockle Bay, Crab, Kolleh Town & Grey Bush (CKG), Susan’s Bay, Dwarzack, Colbot, Moyiba and Portee Rokupa.

In 2018/19, the learning alliance brought together **105 people from 35 countries**, including staff from SLURC and DPU, ESD MSc students, local interns and community facilitators.
Heads and hands on

- 30 transect walks mapping physical conditions in each settlement
- 120 interviews with key stakeholders & local community members
- 500 household surveys
- 40 focus group discussions (FGDs)
- 15 action-planning workshops
Cooperative disaster risk reduction involves building up collective solutions that address the roots of risk and are responsive to heterogeneous realities and experiences on the ground.

Strengthening local networks can help to prepare, prevent and recover from disaster events, providing an alternative to relocation, which disrupts and in many cases destroys social networks.
Communities settled in fragile and risk-prone areas can play an active role in safeguarding vital ecosystems that support the life and economy of Freetown now and into the future.
Insecure tenure erodes the capacity of the urban poor to improve the settlements where they live and to sustain their livelihoods.

Tenure security can be enhanced by protecting their right to land and housing through collective usufruct entitlements.
Household-based upgrading

Poor women and men devote significant resources over time to upgrade their living conditions in informal settlements.

In many settlements, landlord-tenant agreements are in place to recognize individual investments made at the household level through rental deductions.

Incentives for tenants to undertake improvements in housing and basic services have a positive impact of the health of children and the elderly and of the community as a whole.
Community-led upgrading

In community-led upgrading, local residents take a lead in planning, developing and managing existing and new services, such as toilets, drainage, water points and solid waste collection.

Improving inclusivity is essential to help address issues of access, location, affordability and management in the provision of vital services.

This requires working together with local authorities and utility providers to ensure more flexible payment options that match different local needs.
The bulk of financial efforts devoted to DRM are made by local communities through contributions made at the household level.

In 2015, the Colbot community raised collectively 40% of the SLL 7.2 million invested to reduce the incidence of fire outbreaks attributed to poor electric wiring and faulty meters.

Over the last five years the Freetown City Council has dedicated between 5-10% of its annual budget for DRM, amounting to about £62,500 p/y (10%) spent mainly of disaster recovery and clean-up activities.
Actionable knowledge is power

Urban ARK:
www.urbanark.org/remaprisk

SLURC website:
https://www.slurc.org/publications.html

DPU ESD MSc website: http://bit.ly/2RelE41
Any questions? Tenki!

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