Community Led Mapping:

Following the subject of our last blog post, the ‘Mapping for Change’ capacity building workshop hosted by SLURC and Development Planning Unit staff, we have been undertaking community-led mapping in 15 of Freetown’s neighbourhoods. The aim of this process is to collect localised data on the various risks faced by residents of these informal settlements – what the problems are, where they are located, who is vulnerable to them, and what is being done to mitigate them.

The up-to-date information produced in this project, specific to the selected informal settlements, will be used by and for residents in a number of ways. It is a tool for groups of residents to demand effective responses that are designed for each communities’ specific requirements. These can be planned and supported by different actors, including local governments and NGOs. Information, including the maps produced, can also be used to change negative attitudes towards the informal settlements and their residents.

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Residents of Greybush, which forms part of the C.K.G. community, in their focus group with field data collectors. We conducted these sessions so that residents could share information on their risk perception and coping mechanisms, before we undertook transect walks through the area.
A set of community toilets built across a river in the coastal Cockle Bay area, built by the YMCA and FEDURP in 2017 – an example of the type of intervention our team mapped. Other similar interventions range from toilets to taps, and from schools to medical centres – all key to reducing vulnerability of residents to various risks.
Whilst carrying out the mapping, we were accompanied by members of the community including representatives of FEDURP, who provided information vital to the process. This is a bridge built in 2016 by the Cockle Bay community with the support of the YMCA.
Following the training delivered by our partners from the Development Planning Unit and SLURC staff, data collectors were able to use GPS to mark the exact locations of risks and interventions. These exact coordinates will be used, alongside assorted media, to produce an interactive ‘Storymap’, detailing risk in Freetown’s informal settlements.
A community tap in Cockle Bay (this page), and a spring well in the hillside Dwazark community (next page). One issue that residents from Freetown’s informal settlements face regardless of geography is difficulty of water access – whether it is for consumption, cooking, bathing, or cleaning clothes. These challenges can be exacerbated at different times of year, particularly the dry season, which can create issues of supply and contamination.
A house destroyed by a landslide in the Dwazark settlement – an example of a risk specific to hillside communities. It is important to have a varied selection of settlements because they face different risks, and so have different coping mechanisms and varying priorities due to their differing physical geography.