

SLURC/DPU Action-Learning Alliance

Strategic pathways to

disrupt risk in Freetown

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POLICY BRIEF N^o2

Key points

- The lack of land tenure security is an underlying cause of risk accumulation for informal settlements in Freetown.
- A conceptual shift toward recognising a continuum of land rights needs to be facilitated. A Freetown specific continuum is conceptualised, but needs further expansion.
- **Strategic pathway 1:** Community land titling should be institutionally recognised as a secure form of land tenure, alongside private land titling. The community land trust model has potential for democratised group tenure and can also provide provisions for renter protection.
- **Strategic pathway 2:** Policy should recognise the potential of perceived land tenure security for achieving increased tenure security. Participatory mapping, zero eviction agreements, and public infrastructure investments are discussed as key interventions that increase perceived tenure.
- **Strategic pathway 3:** Policy should move away from relocation focused approaches and opt for participatory shelter upgrading which creates more secure shelters for residents of informal settlements. Inclusive partnerships between the municipality and community members are key to achieving this.
- **Strategic pathway 4:** Policy needs to recognise the role of tenants. In order to increase tenant resilience it should focus on tenant agreements and constructing low-cost rental housing.

Land and Shelter Tenure Security



Figure 1: Freetown, Sierra Leone. Photo Credit: Julia Wesley

Introduction

This policy brief explores how increasing land and shelter security can disrupt cycles of risk accumulation in Freetown while simultaneously increasing environmental justice. It will outline the context of land and shelter tenure security in Freetown, highlighting the history, different land tenure types and the current national and Freetown Council approach to informal settlements. The brief will explain how insecure land and shelter tenure interplays with environmental hazards to create risk traps. Based on this context, the primary recommendation for policy makers is to develop a nuanced understanding of the continuum of land rights that exist in Freetown. Under this overarching theme, four strategic pathways have been identified: community land titling, perceived land tenure, incremental shelter upgrading, and increasing tenant resilience. Together these offer complementary and alternating interventions which could increase land and shelter security for Freetown's informal settlement residents.

Authors

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Background

Land tenure and shelter security in Freetown is a complex issue arising from the interplay of socio-economic, environmental, and political factors. Freetown has undergone rapid urbanisation as livelihood opportunities create a pull-factor and rural conflict during the civil war created a push-factor to rural populations [1]. This influx of people has not been adequately accommodated and has resulted in the creation of informal settlements, which are marked by infrastructural and social vulnerabilities.

Land Tenure System

Sierra Leone has a dualistic land ownership system, encompassing a statutory system and a customary law system. The statutory system is institutionally recognised and operates from financial payment offered by individuals or corporate entities. Customary law co-exists and applies to land that has been managed by the chiefs. Here, land is not sold or leased to anyone outside of the family and the use of the land determined by the chief.

The current land title registration process and cadaster in Freetown are often ineffective and unclear. Four years ago a land cadaster was set-up to roll-out formalisation, but the building was destroyed in a fire and the work failed to be resumed. Land is thus often transacted 'informally', resulting in multiple, often conflicting claimants over the same parcel of land. In essence, the different but interacting land tenure systems in Freetown result in an institutional dissonance to everyday realities of informal settlements.

Implications of Systemic Problems

There has been a lack of affordable housing with only 240 units built in the last 40 years [2] coupled with a rise of rental prices by 650% between 2003 and 2011 [3]. This has resulted in the majority of immigrants becoming trapped in informal settlements located in risk-prone areas at the hillsides or coastal regions of the city. Urban sprawl paired with increasing rental prices pushes urban dwellers to settle in hazard-prone areas with inadequate infrastructure and services.

Residential buildings in Freetown are typically overcrowded, averaging 10 people per home. Inefficient and weak makeshift materials are used, thereby increasing the susceptibility to natural hazards [4]. For example, 40% of houses are made from cement block walls and zinc sheet roofs, while 35% are made from mud brick walls. As a result, informal settlements are risk prone areas to be relocated. This threat of eviction is compounded by unrecognized property rights and inconsistent land administration systems.

National Land Policy

The 2015 National Land Policy (NLP) focuses on simplifying the dual land tenure system through the expansion of land surveyance and land registration from the Western Area to the Provinces (National Land Policy). Although the NLP promises policies and practices that protect land rights, ensure equitable access to land for all citizens, and guaranteed tenure security, implementation is hindered by a lack of political commitment and constrained finances.

Community Area Action Plan

Community Area Action Plans have been created for Cockle Bay and Dwarzak by an alliance between residents, SLURC and other organisations. The plans have the ability to recognise and address the needs of the local people which can influence future policies through democratic decision making processes. At present only two settlements have these plans but it is a process which could be carried out in all Freetown's informal settlements. However, it is unclear how they will be implemented on the ground and whether they are influencing city policy.

Transform Freetown Policy

Housing issues are acknowledged in the 'Transform Freetown' policy particularly under the resilience cluster where urban planning and housing forms one of the 11 priority sectors. Specifically it aims to build 5000 low cost housing units by 2022. In addition Freetown City Council (FCC) plans to develop the Freetown Zonal Plan and ensure over 90% of the buildings constructed abide by housing regulations. However, the policy fails to address land tenure insecurity and the fragile position of tenants.

Risk Accumulation from Insecure Land Tenure

Land tenure security is an underlying cause of risk accumulation for informal settlements in Freetown. There are three folds to the problem: the provision of infrastructures and services to land with insecure tenure are poor or lacking; the absence of an individual's right to the land undermines informal settlements' ability to cope with episodic risks; and beneath these conditions lies the lack of institutional and legal support from the FCC. These conditions erode informal settlements' capacity to prevent and respond to large- and small-scale risks, trapping them into a cycle of risk accumulation.

Freetown was initially planned for 300,000 residents [5], but today the city hosts more than 1 million inhabitants [6]. However, FCC's legal system does not recognise the de facto tenure system. Lack of legal recognition and perception of tenure security in informal settlements creates social vulnerabilities which lead to growing environmental health hazards. Moreover, conflicting interests of land use between informal settlements and commercial areas create fears of eviction which demotivate low-income residents to invest in housing improvement.

Within the informal settlements, residents are exposed to interrelated environmental hazards. Informal settlements located in estuaries experience flooding from seasonal rains, storm surges and inland floodings. Poor waste management in these settlements causes drainage blockage, leading to further problems such as flooding and inadequate sanitation. Overcrowded conditions also make vulnerable groups such as women and children [7] more susceptible to diseases. Fire outbreaks occur frequently, and often spread rapidly due to the congested formation of informal settlements. Moreover, municipal responses to fire outbreaks are inadequate due to poor access and lack of resources [8].

Without tenure security, informal settlements are forced to endure in a cycle of risk accumulation which intensifies health and social concerns. Thus, legally recognising the complex forms of settlements, and providing informal settlers with a sense of land security can help break such cycles of risk accumulation.

Required Conceptual Shifts

In order to break such risk traps, the importance of tenure security has to be recognised. We suggest that conceptual shifts need to take place in regards to land and shelter tenure security.

Continuum of Land Rights

Policy recommendation: Develop a nuanced understanding of Freetown's continuum of land rights. Institutional reform toward recognition of such a continuum.

Land tenure is often understood in a binary fashion: formal/informal, legal/illegal, customary/private. In the case of Freetown, formal and informal housing markets are inseparable. They are mutually dependent and are often intertwined in a multitude of hybrid forms. Simultaneously, global voices in land development, like the UN HABITAT and the Global Land Tool Network, have recognised that various forms of land tenure systems can co-exist in any place and time. As such, land tenure is better understood as functioning along a continuum. Tenure security between different tenure systems varies, but can also vary within the same system and type. It is also important to recognise the multi-directional movement between different tenure systems along the spectrum, which can increase or decrease residents' tenure security. Policy must recognise the spectrum of land rights present in Freetown, as opposed to the binary understanding of land rights present in the current Land Policy.

This can be achieved by creating a nuanced understanding of formal and informal practices and evaluate their potential for improving tenure security. A city-specific continuum of land rights offers this opportunity. This brief started populating the continuum for Freetown (Fig. 2), which identifies four co-existing tenure systems: ownership, shelter renting, land leasing and land occupation. We suggest that in Freetown tenure security is dependent on both the recognition and interaction of institutions and communities, thus the functioning along two x-axes. It also visualises eviction threats, with an "eviction line" denoting institutional recognition. We suggest that the most powerful entry point for policy intervention is the shifting of this eviction line. Policies have the opportunity to shift the line toward the left extreme, thereby increasing tenure security. However, this



Figure 1: Provisional continuum of land rights for Freetown

is only a starting point and we encourage strong engagement and updating by policymakers. The Global Land Tools Network's framework for evaluating continuum of land rights scenarios [9], offers helpful guidance for this in the future.

The continuum of land tenure builds on enabling the movement of residents and tenants between tenure types [10]. Conventional approaches of land regularisation would follow an evolutionary approach focused on the progression towards the end goal of registered freehold titles. However, private titling does not necessarily offer the most secure tenure to informal settlement dwellers, especially for women functioning within households. Land regularisation into the formal market also counteracts objectives of environmental justice, as the most vulnerable residents are disproportionately affected by associated costs, land speculation and gentrification [11]. Furthermore, rigid uni-directional regularisation does not account for the heterogeneity present in informal settlements and does not consider the communal land strategies prevalent throughout Sierra Leone. Implementing private land titling on mass also requires immense institutional capacity, rendering it an inefficient use of municipal resources for Freetown [12]. Policies should therefore actively promote alternatives to private titling. The option of communal land titling is explored as the first strategic pathway toward tenure security.

Policy therefore needs to recognise complex, overlapping and different forms of tenure, as well as allow residents to move between different forms of tenure. It must allow for the deployment of various tools that lead to the administrative recognition of land tenure for informal settlement residents, thereby incrementally increasing their tenure security. Perceived land tenure, incremental shelter upgrading and increasing tenant resilience are identified as such strategic pathways.

Strategic Pathways

Pathway 1: Community Land Titling

Policy recommendation: Community land titling should be institutionally recognised as a secure form of land tenure, alongside private land titling.

Box 1: Case-study: Community Land Trust (CLT) in Voi, Kenya

The community land trust model was chosen as the preferred tenure system over private land titling by the Voi community. While institutional reform to accommodate the CLT delayed implementation substantially, it was nonetheless successful in offering affordable land and dwellings to community members [14]. Dwellings within in the CLT were a third of the price of equivalent dwellings in formal land market neighbourhoods. Renters were also a part of the trust, with trust regulations protecting them from evictions and unfair rent increases.

Preconditions that enabled the success of the CLT model:

- Coherent, well-organised but heterogeneous community
- Model chosen by community themselves
- CLT similar to previous land management system
- Technical assistance from international institutions
- Government support and willingness to reform policy

Communal land rights offer a strategic pathway to tenure security for informal settlements, while protecting their land from exploitative market-forces. The objective is the realisation of the social function of land, which in an urban context is the ability to access land for habitation. Communal land rights represent an opportunity to secure equitable access to land for the most vulnerable residents in informal settlements, thereby helping to alleviate environmental injustice. Often referred to as urban land commons, urban land is possessed communally (not traditionally) and thus removed from the formal market, while land-use rights are controlled in full, or partially by the owner community. Different types of land-sharing foundations facilitate group tenure, most notably community land trusts, housing cooperatives and adverse possession rights (usucapion) [13]. In Freetown community land trusts hold the greatest relevance for informal settlements, as it represents a democratisation and urbanisation of the widely understood rural-traditional form of land management.

Community Land Trust Model

In the Community Land Trust (CLT) Model land is held and managed by a community trust, the functioning of which is chosen by the community to ensure fair representation. In some cases land is bought communally, while in other cases municipal or state land is released to communities. By protecting land from speculative forces, through their removal from the formal land market, land parcels and dwellings can be offered at more affordable rates. Community members (ie. trust members) are awarded individual or family-based use-rights to land and have ownership of the structure constructed upon such land. The top-structure can be sold, but under protective provisions set-out by the trust. The cost of land is therefore not passed on to inhabitants, while still enabling capital accumulation through investment in individual houses. In a case-study from Kenya (see Box 1), renters are protected by the CLT from unjust arbitrary evictions and rent increases. This model, therefore, offers a strategic way in which to increase renter resilience in Freetown.

Opportunities

Institutional support to accommodate urban land commons, like land trusts, has the potential to provide more equitable

access to tenure security and affordable urban livelihoods. CLTs are particularly appropriate for informal settlements situated on municipal land. However, it is important that this model is chosen by communities under conditions of free, prior, and informed consent. We thus encourage that communities are extensively familiarised with the concept during community building processes of both tenure and shelter upgrading (ie. pathways 2 & 3).

Challenges

Traditional communal land rights can afford community leaders near total control over land management in informal settlements, potentially opening up spaces for corruption and favouritism. Subsequently, many residents of informal settlements request private land titles to decrease their vulnerability to such power structures. However, often the desire is for rights that are secure and cannot be interfered with, which can be provided through the community land trust model.

Furthermore, if banking and finance services are not accessible to the poor, land represents an asset saving opportunity, made possible via private titling. This, in turn, speaks to the need for institutional capacity that can accommodate systems of both private and communal land titling flexibly.

Spatialization

This type of tenure has the potential for informal settlements in Freetown that are older and have existing community organisation or are undergoing community mobilisation. Furthermore, it is to be particularly considered for informal settlements on municipal land. Nonetheless, we will not spatialise this approach as the fundamental to its success is community choice.

Pathway 2: Perceived Land Tenure

Policy recommendation: Recognition of the potential of perceived land tenure security for leading to perceived property rights and subsequent housing investment from residents.

This pathway recognises the challenges of private and community land titling and offers an alternative solution which may be more appropriate for certain areas of Freetown lacking the community cohesion needed for community land titling,

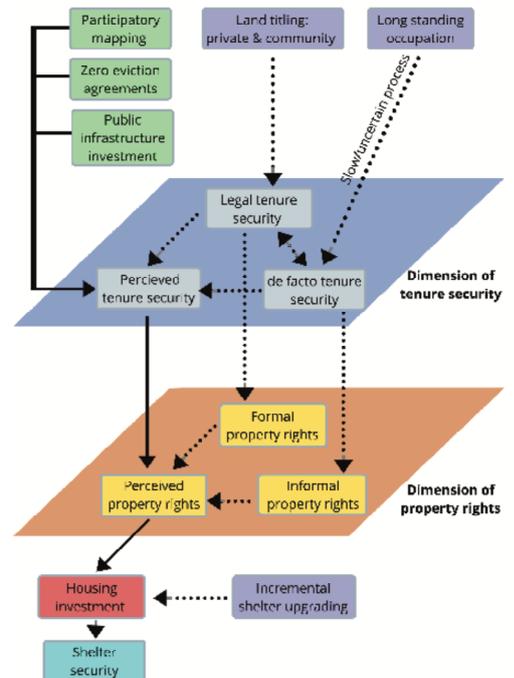


Figure 3: A conceptual framework for the perceived tenure security pathway

and the administrative capacity for private land titling. Perceived land tenure security is an individuals or groups experience of tenure control, regardless of the legal implications that underlie it. De facto tenure security is the actual legal control of land and residential property [15]. De-facto tenure security is one path to perceived tenure security (Fig. 3) however it requires long-standing household occupation. Freetown has a large mobile population coupled with a complex tenancy system and therefore, this strategic pathway focuses on policy interventions which can directly lead to perceived tenure security. This incremental approach is cost-effective and allows settlement communities to consolidate community organisation and resolve competing land claims. Furthermore, it gives government institutions time to make provisions for the recognition of tenure rights that provide upgraded tenure security.

Figure 3 outlines three key interventions required to achieve perceived tenure security: participatory mapping, zero eviction agreements, and public infrastructure investments. Perceived tenure security, in turn, leads to perceived property rights and subsequent housing investment [16] [17]. Perceived land tenure should be understood as a step on the continuum of land and shelter security, one that is completely compatible with tenure formalisation through private or community land titling at a later date.

Evidence for the positive impact of perceived tenure security on housing consolidation can be exemplified by Kiddle's [16] study of seven informal settlements across Fiji. The study found that where perceived land tenure security is higher, greater housing consolidation took place. This demonstrates the potential for policy interventions focused on increasing perceived land tenure security.

Three Key Interventions:

1- Participatory mapping

Participatory mapping is a way of asserting a right to the city by making people and their environments visible. Maps can be used as a tool for securing environmental justice and increasing perceived tenure security. For example, the USAID Mobile Applications to Secure Tenure (MAST) programme allows communities to affordably map and document land and resource rights [18]. MAST has been used by communities in Zambia to systematically map village boundaries, household land and shared resources [19]. In Freetown, such maps could be used to create 'right to use land' agreements (see Intervention 2), occupation certificates, house numbers and addresses. Furthermore, maps can be used to collect the information required for block layouts, and structural improvements. For example, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) devices and settlement level surveys were used to support communities in Cuttack (India) to map informal settlements. The process helped create a dialogue between communities, civil society and the local administrations, who then directed government funds towards settlement upgrading plans [20].

Participatory mapping was successfully used in the creation of the Cockle Bay Community Action Area Plan in identifying the main housing challenges [21]. This demonstrates that mapping can be used to inform land policy in Freetown.

2- Zero eviction agreements

Ruling out evictions is a particularly effective way of increasing perceived tenure security [22]. This intervention involves administrative mechanism which focuses on securing rights at a settlement scale before focusing on individual rights. Interventions could include agreements between the community and authority, a simple statement by the relevant government minister, or a moratorium on relocations and evictions [15]. A successful example includes the passing of the Urban Development and Housing Act in the Philippines, in 1992, which required local governments to observe a moratorium on evictions and demolitions of informal settlements [23].

There are already calls for such interventions in Freetown, for example, the Cockle Bay Action Area Plan's second integrated principle asserts achieving "security of tenure for all, with no evictions or displacement" [21] (p.78). One way an agreement could be reached is by the Cockle Bay community agreeing not to extend the land banks (which puts them at risk from coastal flooding) in exchange for the Government granting them the right to use the land.

3- Public infrastructure investment

Kiddle [16] found that the presence of infrastructure and utilities hugely increased

land tenure security. Government and NGO investment in public infrastructure in informal settlements, such as roads and street lighting, would increase perceived tenure security. Residents will then have physical evidence that these actors support their continued use of the land and want to improve the conditions. For example, in Bogota (Colombia) informal settlement residents are constitutionally entitled to access public utilities. This results in perceived tenure security, with most residents not actively seeking formal tenure [15].

This investment intervention could also focus reducing environmental risk. For example, in Cockle Bay the land banks could be consolidated using concrete blocks and iron rods, to reduce the risk of collapse, as part of the agreement with the residents not to extend the banks further.

Opportunities

The Ministry of Lands 2015 Land Policy, and Freetown's City Council 'Transform Freetown' Report, have opened up new opportunities for collaboration between government officials, NGOs, and local communities in order to improve the land administration system [12]. This is beneficial for this pathway which will require the political will to improve tenure security for informal settlements in a participatory way [16].

Kiddle [16] found civil society had an important role in aiding perceived tenure security. Freetown has an active civil society which can provide support and advocate for new approaches to land policy.

Challenges

One major challenge is that many informal settlers are tenants. Therefore, while the policy may increase tenure security it may not directly lead to housing investments by occupiers, seeing as they are not the legal owners. It will be important to engage both landlords and tenants when the interventions are applied to settlements where renter-occupation dominantes.

Another inhibiting factor could be that even though residents have perceived tenure security they do not have the resources to improve their housing. This is where Strategic Pathway 3 will play a complementary role (See Fig. 3).

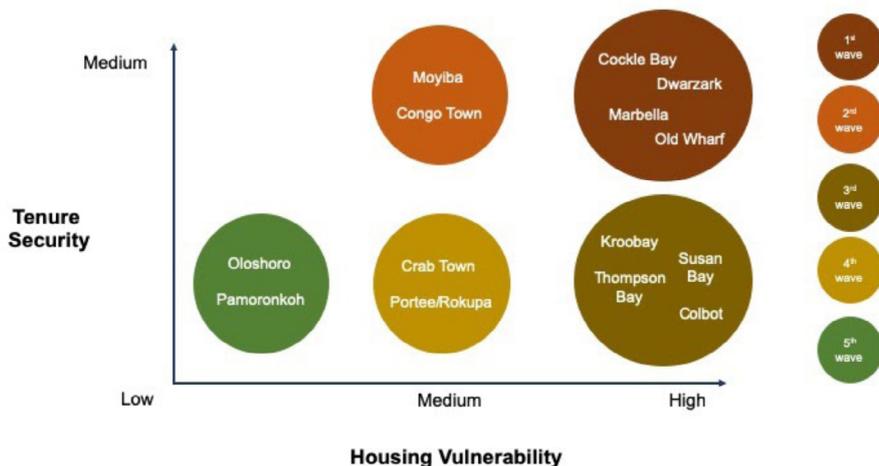


Figure 4: Prioritisation of settlements for the implementations of Strategic Pathway 2

Spatialisation

This pathway will be most effective for settlements on state-owned land because it allows the state to invest in local infrastructure, thereby ruling out evictions without having to negotiate and purchase the land first. It is likely that the pathway will be most effective in settlements where the majority of households are land occupying, dwelling owners [16]. Settlements with the lowest quality housing should be prioritised due to pre-existing links between poor housing and increased vulnerability to environmental hazards.

Using the ReMapRisk Freetown data [24] and the factors highlighted above, this policy brief has identified, out of the 15 informal settlements surveyed, which should be prioritised for this strategic pathway (Fig. 4). Medium tenure security is defined as 'privately owned estates lacking title deeds' while low tenure security is defined as 'rented housing'. Therefore, this brief suggests the settlements identified as having both medium tenure security and high housing vulnerability should be prioritised for this pathway. As such, it is likely that Cockle Bay, Dwarzark, and Old Wharf, have the most potential because they are on state land which has been claimed and occupied. If these interventions are successful in the first wave of settlements, relevant stakeholders could extend the pathway to other settlements in Freetown. The subsequent wave order for other informal settlements in Freetown was also constructed on the likelihood of success based on tenure type and level of priority (Fig. 4). This analysis has been spatialised on a map of Freetown (Fig. 5). This policy brief recognises that there are many factors, in particular community approval, which will determine what settlements are most suited to these interventions. Therefore, this spatialisation should be viewed as a starting point for policy actors, one that can be adapted based on further research.

Pathway 3: Incremental Shelter Upgrading

Policy Recommendation: Policy should move away from a relocation focused approach and instead opt for participatory shelter upgrading. The policy should promote inclusive partnerships.

Relocation should be avoided whenever possible. This is evidenced by the 2015 relocation of Colbot flood victims

six miles north of Waterloo, which was considered unsuccessful and unsustainable [25]. Although the victims were more secure in terms of disaster risk, they suffered major socio-environmental and economic impacts including loss of access to livelihoods and services. As a result, relocated people are faced with a trade-off between compromised opportunities and moving back to hazardous sites. Therefore, the in-situ upgrading of informal settlements through cooperative community initiatives should be actively pursued in favor of relocation.

Box 2: Case-study Shelter Upgrading in South Africa

The Urban-Think Tank in cooperation with dwellers and local NGOs developed the Empower Shack project. It developed a scalable and replicable model to upgrade existing one-storey buildings to multiple storeys. They make use of computational urban design prototyping (CUDP), a software that enables multiple actors, including local dwellers to engage in the planning process and negotiate the allocation of public and private spaces according to their needs [26].

Potentials of the project:

- Integration of street networks, accessibility and already existing structures to construct living environments, with particular recognition of safe spaces for women and children
- Inclusion of social preferences to prevent the loss of community and social networks
- Community driven land readjustment that unlocks internal community land market

Participatory Settlement Upgrading

Participatory shelter upgrading involves co-planning between the municipality and community residents. This collaborative planning process uses local knowledge, technologies and capabilities in planning of settlement improvements. The structural improvement of shelters makes them more resilient to environmental hazards thus helping to break the cycle of risk accumulation.

Opportunities

One tool for achieving incremental shelter upgrading is saving programs. Here, community members with support from the government, commit to small and frequent inputs into a fund which can then be reinvested into community land acquisitions and housing improvements. The Baan Mankong housing programme, for example, has provided shelter security for over 96,000 houses in Thailand through this method [27]. Importantly, most informal settlements in Freetown have existing savings groups and CODOHSAPA and the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) play important roles in facilitating such processes. Additionally, municipal support to these existing programmes is essential.

The major opportunity for this pathway is that it is complementary to Strategic Pathway 1 and 2. It can be used by a community following the procurement of a community land ownership or it can be used by communities whose perceived land tenure security has been improved to consolidate their housing.

Challenges

Ensuring meaningful participation of the community is a considerable challenge. Although this pathway provides existing communities and tenants with improved living conditions, it does not create space for new urban residents. A potential solution could include the densification of residents, achieved by the construction of higher quality buildings meeting safe standards, factors covered more thoroughly on Strategic Pathway Four.

Spatialisation

The areas with the highest housing vulnerabilities and low to medium tenure security should be prioritised. Settlements that fulfil these conditions are highlighted in Figure 5. Particular attention should be paid to in-situ interventions for Colbot, because of previous interventions with unintended consequences. Further spatialisation is not possible at this time, as more further shelter data is necessary for the informal settlements.

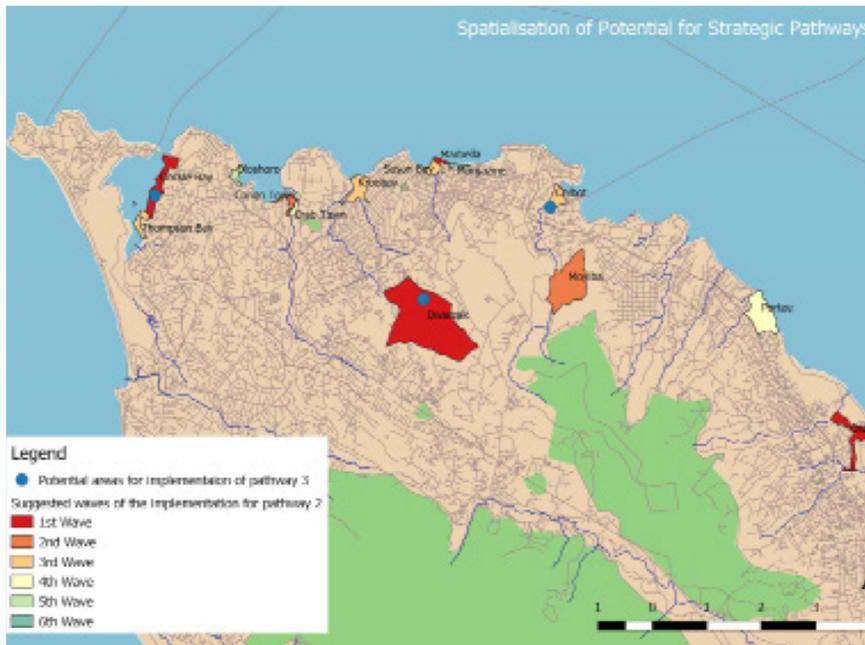


Figure 5: Spatialisation of potential for strategic pathways, source authors, adapted from ReMapRisk Freetown

Pathway 4: Increased Tenant Resilience

Policy recommendation: Policy needs to institutionally recognise the role of tenants. In order to increase tenant resilience it should focus on tenant agreements and constructing low-cost rental housing.

Policy recommendations need to acknowledge that the percentage of tenants in informal settlements across Freetown is high and that a multitude of tenancy settings exist. In Susan's Bay, for example, 95% of dwellers are tenants [2]. Thus, increasing tenure security within the tenant tenure system could increase the resilience of a large population of Freetown's informal settlements. Firstly, tenancy allows residents to easily upgrade to improved shelter as they gain the means, thereby also offering a kind of incremental shelter upgrading. Secondly, being able to move between neighbourhoods allows residents to move according to their needs, thus avoiding restrictive neighbourhood effects [28]. In practice, residential mobility is most effectively facilitated through the low transaction costs of moving and the ability to easily establish and terminate tenancy agreements. However, it is important to emphasise that movement should be voluntary and not caused by political, market or arbitrary eviction, which could result in loss of informal employment networks and social support systems. As a result, policy needs to maintain the resilience that tenancy system provides for residents, while avoiding its risks.

Intervention: Low-Cost rental housing

Multi-storey apartment blocks offer the potential to create formally recognised rental settings for low-income dwellers. Low investment on behalf of the tenants, makes it particularly suitable for newly arrived migrants and young professionals, who need to move frequently. Therefore, multi-storey apartments facilitate flexibility for tenants who move according to their employment needs. Additionally, apartment blocks enable multi-sectoral planning, and the integration of social facilities, schools, grocery stores, and health care centres with close proximity to living areas. Informal activities could be facilitated e.g. through allocating spaces for informal markets and allowing informal tenant relations to continue.

Opportunities

In Freetown, investment into low-cost rental housing has been integrated in urban development planning in the past e.g. in the National Development Plan of 1974/75 and the Freetown Structural Plan 2014. However, the aims were never met resulting in less than 1,000 low-cost housing units being built between 1961 and 2006 [2]. The Transform Freetown Agenda similarly promotes the construction of more than 5,000 quality low-cost housing units for Freetown" [29] by 2022. In order to avoid previous mistakes, an inclusive approach is emphasised to ensure the adequacy of the project and its acceptance within the community. As suggested by Transform Freetown a close collaboration between the municipality, local NGOs and the dwellers is vital.

Challenges

While formally recognised, low-cost rental housing facilitates tenant resilience due to low transaction costs of moving, its impacts on the community have to be carefully considered. Inadequate location of multi-storey buildings may disrupt communal support networks, leaving people socially marginalised. Additionally, informal rental settings might be ignored and discouraged, despite them making up the majority of tenant housing.

Spatialisation

Due to population growth and urban migration, there is a need to find new spaces for housing. For example, space may open up in Allen Town, where an existing waste management site may be relocated. However, this is unconfirmed and so will not be discussed further in this policy brief. Additionally, both the Dwarzak and Cockle Bay Area Action Plans have emphasized the need for vertical densification through rental housing such as constructing 3-5 storey apartment buildings in central locations of the settlements. It is suggested to identify similar needs in the remaining settlements.

Conclusion

This policy brief has drawn attention to the underlying problem of land and shelter tenure insecurity in Freetown. Such insecurity exacerbates everyday episodic risks and entraps residents of informal settlements in cycles of risk accumulation. The report has highlighted the inadequate attention paid to land and shelter tenure security in current national and city land policies. It emphasises the need to adopt a continuum of land rights into land policy and recognises the multi-directional movement between different tenure systems along the spectrum, which can increase or decrease residents' tenure security. Subsequently, the policy brief has identified four strategic pathways to increase land and shelter tenure security: community land titling, perceived land tenure, incremental shelter upgrading, and increasing tenant resilience. These can be seen as key entry points to streamline further research, create institutional priorities, and update inefficient existing policies.

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