

## REDUCING RELOCATION RISK

IN URBAN AREAS

## Building better to build back better: understanding value, cost, and risk in Kampala, Uganda

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### Introduction

In Kampala, Uganda, where the topography is a series of hills and low-lying wetland areas, the most serious climate-induced disasters are localised or large-scale flooding, which often lead to cascading impacts on health, loss of income, disruption of livelihoods and destruction of property and infrastructure. Flooding-related events are likely to increase with climate change. People living in informal settlements in low-lying wetland areas are the most frequently and heavily impacted. The urban poor and many who are not poor are forced to make settlement decisions that expose them to these risks, because of the options of minimizing costs by living in these areas as well as the opportunities accrued from the locations, such as access to food, livelihoods and schools.

Urban expansion in the Kampala region is driven by the coupling of demographic shifts and private sector developments, fuelled by the land market and the opening up of land for development. The city is

described as a 'runaway' city and most development is informal. The nature by which the city has developed over the decades makes it difficult and impractical to deconstruct existing developments, thus government-driven resettlement is not common, although people do try to move themselves out of the worst flooded areas if they have the means. Current approaches to reduce flood risk in Kampala are based solely on infrastructural development, such as waste management and the improvement and maintenance of drainage systems. These alleviate the risk in the immediate area of the intervention, but exacerbate the problem downstream in other wetlands, including polluting Lake Victoria.

This briefing presents an alternative approach to reducing risk with the message that 'urban development can be built better', and where existing settlements are exposed, reduction of risk can benefit from a wide range of non-grey infrastructure.

### Recommendations

#### On Risk-Embedded Urban Development

1. **Urban development can be 'built better'** to take disaster events and climate change impacts on future urban growth into consideration. Current and future risks need to be embedded into all development decisions, including decisions around where and how to build infrastructure and industry.
2. Where existing settlements are already exposed, reduction of risk can benefit from a combination of **grey-green-blue infrastructure** for a holistic storm water management that is robust and ecologically friendly. This can include Sustainable Urban Drainage Design principles (SUDs), such as leaving more green areas on properties for storm water absorption.
3. Prioritizing green infrastructure, by protecting existing wetlands and natural areas from further
4. **Revision of the building codes and standards** so that they are flexible enough to enable more space for water absorption on plots, and technologies for affordable, decent housing.
5. Consideration for **incentives for communities** who have for long contributed financially and technologically to risk reduction through scalable solutions from the household to citywide scales, such as those who are maintaining and improving drainage in their areas, community-driven waste management practices, and greening of properties.

## On Decision-Making Processes for Resettlement

### 1. Understanding the options for disaster risk management requires looking at the exposure of people now and in future, the costs of the impacts, both to the city and to the households, and the values that people and society have.

This research found that people continue to stay in the areas that are regularly flooding, despite the negative economic and health impacts from the flooding, because there are economic opportunities in these areas, such as access to affordable food and transport, and business prospects. Options for disaster risk management needs to address the opportunities that people have or the values they place on living in these areas, otherwise people will continue to occupy these places.

### 2. Resettlement in Kampala is impractical.

Over 60% of Kampala's built-up area is informal settlements<sup>1</sup>. Land tenure systems have had considerable influence on the way the city has grown; tenure is complicated and there can be multiple claims to a plot. Informal settlements are predominantly on private 'mailo' lands, or where customary tenants have freehold or leasehold rights. In practice, this means that the governing body, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), has less power over how the land is used. While the constitution affords the state the right to acquire land for the common good of all citizens, in practice, it is expensive and impractical for the state to enact compulsory land acquisition at scale.

<sup>1</sup> UN-Habitat, 2007. Situation Analysis of Informal Settlements in Kampala. Cities without Slums: Sub-regional Programme for Eastern and Southern Africa. United Nations Human Settlements

### 3. Existing informal settlements should stay where they are and people should be allowed to stay in places that they already occupy if they wish to.

Rather than resettlement, reducing the impacts of flooding through grey-green-blue infrastructure is a better option in these settlements. This is currently the predominant position of the Kampala Capital City Authority, through its designation of heavily built-up areas as 'vanquished wetlands,' and its investments in better drainage for these areas.

The infrastructure deficit increases the risks in informal settlements. But it is important to highlight that the urban poor have demonstrated individual and group ingenuity in creating diverse, risk-minimizing socio-technical infrastructure solutions. Flooding in informal settlements, such as in Bwaise and Natete, results in high economic costs for households, incurring an average US\$13.6 per month on costs associated with flooding, which is a high proportion of the average income of US\$62.8. At the neighbourhood scale, estimated household expenditure on flood-related costs is \$17.4 million annually<sup>2</sup>.

### 4. Many people who are living in the worst flooding areas have indicated they are willing or wanting to move if they can secure land and housing elsewhere.

Identifying these people and developing programmes to enable them to move to other areas, including accompanying land tenure, would enable greening of wetland areas. However, freed-up land would need to be protected from further development.

Programme (UN-HABITAT), Nairobi.

<sup>2</sup> Benoite et al, 2008. Assessment of economic costs and benefits of flooding in Kampala, A Report of FOCUS Cities Kampala.

## On Implementation of Resettlement

### 1. Resettlement and forced evictions as a result of urban development or urban infrastructure projects, including those intended to reduce risk, should stop.

There is a need for a comprehensive, encompassing resettlement framework with a socially just valuation system that can reduce the disruption of life and social systems of affected people. Where resettlement is the only option, compensation for people's property rights and the disruption of social and economic systems should be based on just, market-informed valuation.

### 2. Where risk has been identified and strategies for its reduction implemented, resettlement has been undertaken but in a way that is largely program or project-specific, unfair and disfavours the urban poor.

For example, urban infrastructure projects, such as drainage channel widening in

Kampala (KIIDP I and II) are designed to reduce urban flooding and improve road infrastructure. Both of the projects have prepared a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) in line with national and local legal frameworks that regulate land relations in Uganda. Depending on their property rights, people to be resettled are compensated for their loss (of land, property or access) either in kind or cash. **However, the compensation is not applied consistently, fairly or evenly by local and/or state authorities.** Those receiving compensation do not receive enough money to replace what has been lost. There is no comprehensive 'resettlement' where new land, housing and services are offered. Renters and other forms of tenancy are left out of compensation and are often not included in communications about impending evictions. While **there is a need for effective resettlement policies**, in practice, it is constrained by larger land market dynamics and the impacts of uncontrolled urbanisation.

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# References and further reading

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This policy note accompanies a series of 'Reducing Relocation Risk in Urban Areas' case study reports on Uganda, available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/reducing-relocation-risk-urban-areas>

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## Author details and contact

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# About the project

The research project “Reducing Relocation Risks in Urban Areas” examines the various social and economic implications of climate-risk related resettlement and relocation policies in cities across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Policy briefs are available for each region, and there is a cross-regional policy brief. The project was carried out by The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London, Makerere University, Uganda, The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), and the Latin American Social Science Faculty (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales) (FLACSO), and funded by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network. More information and project publications can be found at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/reducing-relocation-risk-urban-areas>



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