

# Climate Displacement in African Cities:

Insights from Nairobi, Kampala and Freetown

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## **Climate Displacement in African Cities: Insights from Nairobi, Kampala and Freetown**

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## Introduction

At COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) launched the Global Mayors Action Agenda on Climate and Migration (the Action Agenda). The initiative responds to two trends. First, people who are forced to leave their homes as a consequence of disasters and climate change often move into cities, and municipal authorities therefore need to prepare for and respond to sudden and more gradual increases in the urban population. Second, cities are themselves exposed to hazards, including rising sea levels, storm surges, flooding, drought and so forth. Growing populations of people in situations of vulnerability, including those already displaced, often live in informal or poorly planned settlements where the risk of (secondary) displacement can be high.

Significantly, the City Principles for Inclusive Action on Climate and Migration, which forms part of the Action Agenda, expressly commits to a human rights-based approach. Mayors commit at principle 4 to:

*“Endeavor to welcome people moving or displaced into our cities, including for climate-related reasons ensuring fundamental rights and equitable access to services, regardless of migration or legal status.”*

The UN High Level Panel on Internal Displacement has also called for enhanced action to address displacement in cities, recommending:

*“States must recognize that internal displacement is likely to be increasingly an urban phenomenon and should support local authorities to address it deliberately as part of urban planning, including in spatial planning, and make full use of the cities’ resources, infrastructure and capacities to contribute to solutions.”*

In Africa, the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative Action Agenda emphasizes the relationship between local development, climate resilience and human mobility:

*“Pursue community-led solutions for climate-resilient development, disaster response and climate mobility across the continent, and invest in locally anchored climate adaptation and resilience pathways, including strong connections in border areas.”*

In response to these global and regional processes, authorities working primarily at local level in Nairobi (Kenya), Kampala (Uganda) and Freetown (Sierra Leone) collaborated with Lund University and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law to jointly examine human rights and gender equality dimensions of climate-

and disaster-related displacement in their cities, in a project supported by the Swedish Institute and part of its Public Sector Innovation Program .

The Kenya team was represented by local authority actors from the wider Nairobi metropolitan area, including Kajiado, Kiambu and Machakos Counties. Participants included municipal managers and coordinators, authorities responsible for urban development, financial controllers, as well as the first lady of Kajiado County. The Uganda team was represented by actors with responsibility for town planning, economic development, media and communication, risk management, community services, emergency medical services, and water resources management. Participants came from national government as well as local government in Kampala and neighbouring Jinja municipalities. The Sierra Leone team was represented by the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS), which acts as an auxiliary to the national government and plays a key role in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for response in Freetown.

The project involved in-person and online learning exchanges structured by the Framework for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality (FIRE). The FIRE Framework consolidates international human rights standards and guidelines and gender equality perspectives into six dimensions: governance systems and structures; fundamental rights and equality; non-discrimination; participation and access to information; agency and empowerment and social norms and context. Within each dimension, a number of specific elements are featured. The six dimensions and accompanying elements are reflected in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: The FIRE Framework

From October 2022 until August 2023 teams representing each city worked together to

develop City Profiles structured around the FIRE Framework. The City Profiles examine the phenomenon of climate- and disaster-related displacement within the municipality, taking into account the six dimensions of FIRE. Each group also developed recommendations for practical action building on the insights derived from the development of the City Profiles. Importantly, these Profiles reflect a learning process, rather than a rigorous academic or operational analysis. They reflect the extensive combined knowledge of the participants, but point very clearly to the need for more in-depth, participatory research to further explore and understand the dynamics they identify.

This report consolidates the insights from the three City Profiles and draws broader conclusions that might be relevant for addressing the phenomenon in other African cities.



*Courtesy of KCCA Images | John Paul Agaba*

# Key insights from the City Profiles

## Differential exposure and vulnerability

Although the non-discrimination, social norms and context, and agency and empowerment dimensions of the FIRE framework were considered separately in the programme, the City Profiles consolidate the insights under a single heading of differential exposure and vulnerability. This idea of differential exposure and vulnerability derives from the appreciation that disasters result from the interaction of natural hazards, like cyclones, floods, and drought, with social conditions of exposure and vulnerability. Exposure, which refers to a physical proximity to a hazard, is a social condition because where people live and work is to a significant extent determined by social factors, such as education, income or access to credit which could be consequential to ethnicity, class/caste, social status, or immigration status. Vulnerability, which connotes an individual's susceptibility to harm in a given context, is a social condition because gender, age, ethnicity and other factors shape individual access to resources and information, ability to navigate bureaucracy, legal entitlements, for instance to social welfare and insurance, amongst many others. Some of the factors that shape differential exposure and vulnerability can be identified in legal and policy frameworks, whereas others are grounded more in the social norms and context that operate in a particular locality.

Exposure to flood-related displacement is concentrated in informal settlements, which themselves tend to be located in wetland areas, in close proximity to the sea, or along drainage pathways that flood when routinely blocked by solid waste. In Nairobi, we also considered the role of drought in shaping the mobility of Maasai pastoralists within the metropolitan area. Here, exposure to drought is a perennial feature of a pastoralist livelihood where mobility is a long-established adaptation strategy. However, drought risk is exacerbated in the context of climate change, and urban expansion is curtailing mobility.

The City Profiles all highlight gender as a primary determinant of differential exposure and vulnerability. This variable is evident in particular during displacement, where the risk of sexual and gender-based violence increases, for instance when women seek shelter after being displaced by flooding. Social norms and context also dictate that women tend to assume more intensive responsibility for children and older persons within family and social networks, and men are often absent either engaged in migratory labour, or otherwise electing not to play a role in family life.

Disability was another factor identified as contributing to an experience of vulnerability

to displacement risk. None of the cities maintain bespoke evacuation centres, meaning people with mobility impairments will face challenges relating to accessibility of facilities during displacement.

Notably, these characteristics intersect, potentially compounding exposure and vulnerability. In Kampala, for instance, the example of the death of a young refugee boy who lived with serious disabilities was recounted. The boy relied entirely on his father, who happened to be away when the neighbourhood flooded.

Vulnerability among pastoralists was seen to be increasing as a consequence of urban expansion, which introduced increasing constraints on mobility patterns as traditional routes became enclosed, resulting in a form of involuntary immobility.

Importantly, as authorities have not focused on urban displacement risk in the past, differential exposure and vulnerability needs to be explored in far greater detail.

## Governance systems and structures

The integration of rights and equality in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is shaped not only by a country's legislation, policies and plans but also by the governance structures and systems which enact and implement them, at national and sub-national levels.

The governance dimension of FIRE focuses on developing and/or improving three types of systems:

- Legal and policy frameworks relevant to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and sustainable development that are based on international standards and guidelines on gender equality and human rights
- Institutions for decision-making and accountability that enable people, particularly those belonging to disadvantaged or marginalized groups, to exercise their rights to voice, to participate, and to claim rights and entitlements
- Diverse platforms for civil society, particularly disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to articulate and pursue the realization of their rights



Across all systems, attention should be paid to identifying and addressing institutionalized exclusion on the basis of social status, such as gender, age, disability, class, caste, ethnicity, and others.

Strengthening governance systems and structures requires increasing coherence between sectors, stakeholders and levels of governance. It also requires enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency.

This dimension also highlights the need for adequate budgets and non-financial resources, as well as opportunities and initiatives to strengthen the diverse capacities required to achieve the kinds of societal transformations needed to reduce risks, adapt to climate change, and pursue rights-based and inclusive sustainable development.



A key insight emerging from the City Profiles is that displacement does not feature prominently in city-level planning or practice. Although people living in informal settlements in each city are displaced in recurrent flooding, local authorities in Freetown, Nairobi and Kampala do not monitor the number or experience of people forced from their homes in this context. Indeed, apart from an awareness that people may seek shelter in public buildings like schools, or perhaps move in with relatives for a period, authorities had limited knowledge about displacement dynamics within the municipality. In this context, lack of a specific mandate to address displacement, combined with a lack of data or means

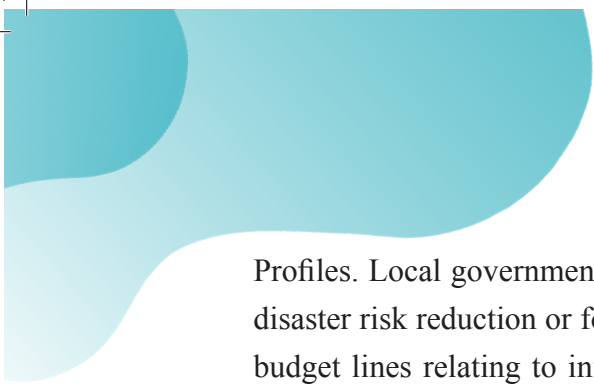
to systematically collect data, results in a situation where the scale and characteristics of the problem are poorly understood and, consequently, not effectively addressed by local government.

The national Red Cross/Red Crescent Society emerged as an important actor in addressing urban disaster displacement given its role as an auxiliary to the government and its expertise in disaster management generally. The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, for instance, plays a critical role in both reducing displacement risk, and protecting people during displacement through support for community-based early warning and evacuation initiatives. Still, limited resources make protection of people during displacement, in terms of adequate shelter, food, access to medical services, protection from violence, amongst others, difficult to ensure.

Wider institutionalized platforms for civil society in the field of disaster risk reduction and specifically in the context of displacement did not appear robust in any of the cities. Reference is made in the Kampala and Freetown City Profiles to mechanisms for integrating civil society initiatives within the broad governance strategy of the municipality, but this is not the same thing as providing institutionalized platforms for an independent civil society to dialogue, including critically, with duty bearers on issues relating to disasters and displacement.



The resource challenge, although not sufficient in itself to generate the problem of disaster-related displacement in urban informal settlements, nonetheless constitutes an important element. Resource constraints are evident in staffing levels in national as well as local disaster risk management units, as reflected in the Kampala and Freetown City




Profiles. Local government budgets do not allocate substantial resources specifically for disaster risk reduction or for addressing displacement risk in that context, although other budget lines relating to infrastructure development, public health, solid waste management, amongst others, indirectly contribute to disaster risk reduction – highlighting the importance of coordinated multi-level, multi-sectoral action. Additionally, large-scale infrastructure initiatives, such as the Lubigi and Nakivubo drainage channels in Kampala, are financed by international actors like the World Bank.

Accountability, transparency and access to justice are core principles of a human rights-based approach, but they do not feature prominently in the City Profiles. Although instances of disaster risk creation are identified, and arguments can be made that national and local authorities need to allocate more resources to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in order to address foreseeable threats to life, the complexity of the challenge makes attribution of responsibility difficult. The predicament facing local government in relation to exposed informal settlements is complex. Improvements to infrastructure take place, but conflict with environmental protection imperatives where settlements are located in protected wetland areas. Further, upgrading risks making sites more desirable to people with more power, resulting in people in more marginalized situations being pushed out. Relocation seems like a poor solution that has failed in specific instances, as described in the Kampala and Freetown City Profiles. These points are developed further in relation to the fundamental rights dimension.

Although this observation suggests a limited role for litigation or similar efforts to establish accountability for harmful acts or omissions on the part of the state or its agents, or indeed in relation to the conduct of private sector actors involved in disaster risk creation, closer engagement with civil society and national human rights institutions may well point to other dimensions of the problem where these mechanisms have more of a role to play. The anti-corruption agenda is particularly relevant in this context. Engaging with national and local government, however, more productive avenues for pursuing a human rights-based and gender-equal approach to urban displacement risk can be found in other elements of FIRE.

Before leaving the governance systems and structures dimension, however, it is important to highlight the specific predicament of pastoralists living in proximity to urban areas. Local government officials from the Nairobi metropolitan area, including Kajiado County and Machakos County, provided insight into experiences of mobility and involuntary immobility of Maasai pastoralists impacted by a combination of urban expansion and drought. In addition to the impact of their predicament on specific rights, detailed in the next section below, some governance aspects impacting mobility as a livelihood strategy are also highlighted in the Nairobi City Profile.



Pastoralists living in proximity to urban areas are experiencing encroaching involuntary immobility as urban expansion impacts access to traditional grazing land and disrupts transhumance pathways. Drought compounds these challenges. The role of urban expansion in delimiting pastoralist livelihood strategies has been recognized, but research on the climate-related (im)mobility of pastoralists in the context of urban expansion appears nascent. The City Profile highlights a number of administrative and planning measures that make mobility more difficult for pastoralists experiencing drought-related livelihood stress, including a range of fees and procedures that must be complied with when moving livestock across county lines, as well as failures to plan for transhumance pathways through urban areas. Tensions arise as livestock block roads and encroach on agricultural land and urban centres. Drought, in this context, can be seen as a compounding pressure rather than the sole cause of pastoralist livelihood stress. The City Profile details some support measures introduced by national government, but paints a picture of an increasingly marginalized culture with limited options for sustainable pastoralist livelihoods.

## Fundamental rights

Attention to fundamental rights is at the heart of a human rights-based approach to addressing urban, climate- and disaster-related human mobility. States formally assume international legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil a catalogue of fundamental rights when they ratify international treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. National constitutions routinely identify specific obligations to ensure the enjoyment of human rights in general, as well as specific human rights such as the right to life and the right to a healthy environment. The contemporary catalogue of fundamental rights, evolving since the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, underpins an extensive range of more concrete standards and guidelines that draw on the experience of states over the past 75 years in working to progressively improve the conditions experienced by people living within their jurisdiction. The FIRE Framework includes a consolidation of international standards and guidelines relevant to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and human mobility in this context.

The right to adequate housing, reflected at Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is particularly relevant in the context of flood-related displacement in informal settlements. The City Profiles reflect a nuanced approach to the question of adequate housing, informed by guidance from the UN Committee on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights regarding the key features of the right. In particular, General Comment No 4 elaborates seven features:

- Legal security of tenure
- Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure
- Affordability
- Habitability
- Accessibility
- Location
- Cultural adequacy

Informed by consideration of these seven features, the City Profiles highlight the complexity of addressing displacement risk in informal settlements. Almost by definition, informal settlements situated in areas exposed to hazards, are places where the right to adequate housing is denied. In particular, legal security of tenure is lacking, which means that people are unable or lack incentives to invest in making improvements to their homes, knowing they can be evicted. Homes cannot be insured, meaning disaster losses cannot be recovered. Homes cannot be used as collateral for securing loans, constricting a potential source of finance for economic development. However, local authorities face significant obstacles in relation to the question of tenure, in particular because the settlements are located in exposed areas. The situation facing inhabitants of Bwaise informal settlement in Kampala is further complicated by the fact that the settlement is located in a protected wetland area that prohibits human habitation, highlighting the tension between the realisation of the right to adequate housing and environmental protection.

The ‘location’ dimension of the right to adequate housing helps to further illustrate the challenges associated with addressing climate and disaster risk in informal settlements. Both the Kampala and Freetown City Profiles highlight how authorities have sought to address the exposure faced by people living in informal settlements through planned relocation initiatives. The Freetown City Profile recounts a specific initiative where residents of Kroo Bay were provided the opportunity to relocate to a newly constructed settlement called Mile 6, which was located outside of the city centre. Although some people did move there, most returned to Kroo Bay, citing distance from the livelihood opportunities and access to services available in and around Kroo Bay as a critical factor. Acknowledging the increasingly sprawling and densely populated character of many African cities, opportunities for realizing the right to adequate housing through urban relocation schemes are difficult to identify. Wherever such initiatives are attempted, success will depend on close adherence to the seven dimensions of the right to adequate housing, as well as other relevant international standards and guidelines.

As noted earlier in this report, the right to life is also significant in the context of urban disaster displacement. On one level, drawing on guidance from the UN Human Rights Committee, the right to life needs to be understood as the right to life ‘with dignity’. The Committee explains:

*“The measures called for to address adequate conditions for protecting the right to life include, where necessary, measures designed to ensure access without delay by individuals to essential goods and services such as food, water, shelter, health care, electricity and sanitation, and other measures designed to promote and facilitate adequate general conditions, such as the bolstering of effective emergency health services, emergency response operations (including firefighters, ambulance services and police forces) and social housing programmes.”*



Informal settlements are complex, dynamic social environments, and media representations of slums as desperate sites of human misery do not reflect the diversity of human experience unfolding in those spaces. At the same time, fundamental rights are systematically denied, preventing the full realization of the right to life with dignity. In addition to denials of the right to adequate housing described above, informal settlements in Nairobi, Freetown and Kampala typically lack adequate water and sanitation, and access to electricity is precarious. As noted earlier, inadequate drainage infrastructure, and failures to ensure that drainage is not clogged by solid waste, contributes substantially to flood-related displacement risk in these places. Additionally, when flooding happens, contamination is inevitable. Consequently, notwithstanding their resilience, agency and capacities, people living in informal settlements in the three cities in focus are denied core dimensions of the right to life with dignity.

In addition, people also die during flooding in the informal settlements, reflecting a clear denial of the right to life. In this context, the duty of the state to protect people from foreseeable harm is well-established in international human rights law. According to the Human Rights Committee, drawing on decades of engagement with states parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

*“The obligation of States parties to respect and ensure the right to life extends to reasonably foreseeable threats and life-threatening situations that can result in loss of life. States parties may be in violation of article 6 even if such threats and situations do not result in loss of life.”*

International legal doctrine does not, however, provide a blueprint for how to resolve the increasing challenge of ensuring adequate housing and a wider healthy environment for people living in informal urban settlements, and as noted earlier, pursuing accountability for denials of the right to life in this setting may not provide an effective remedy, even if such avenues might be relevant in the context of disaster risk creation. Rather, the principles, standards and guidelines that have been developed as part of the human rights project over the past 75 years can help to highlight dimensions of a complex problem that can be systematically considered and, to the extent resources, capacities, and political will exist, addressed.

The Nairobi City Profile highlights numerous additional rights that are impacted by the predicament of pastoralists living in the Nairobi metropolitan area. Most notably, the right to culture warrants attention. The right to culture is protected under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Human Rights Committee has recently considered how the impact of climate change and failures to implement adequate adaptation measures can result in a denial of the right to culture. In the case of *Daniel Billy et al v Australia*, the Committee recalled that:

*“... in the case of indigenous peoples, the enjoyment of culture may relate to a way of life which is closely associated with territory and the use of its resources, including such traditional activities as fishing or hunting. Thus, the protection of this right is directed towards ensuring the survival and continued development of the cultural identity. The Committee further recalls that article 27 of the Covenant, interpreted in the light of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, enshrines the inalienable right of indigenous peoples to enjoy the territories and natural resources that they have traditionally used for their subsistence and cultural identity. Although the rights protected under article 27 are individual rights, they depend in turn on the ability of the minority group to maintain its culture, language or religion.”*

With encroaching urbanization, increasingly adverse climate impacts, and movement of pastoralists into urban areas to pursue income-generating activity, the right to culture of indigenous Maasai pastoralists living in the Nairobi metropolitan area is imperiled, as reflected in the Nairobi City Profile. Some recommendations are included in the City Profile for addressing immediate challenges relating to drought, but the larger question of cultural survival is one requiring extensive consultation and cooperation between a variety of actors in the country.

## Participation and access to information

The participation and access to information dimension of the FIRE Framework reflects a broad consensus that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the active and meaningful participation of all people in decision-making that affects their lives. For participation to be active and meaningful, people need access to information, for instance about environmental risks in both immediate and longer-term.

As only the Sierra Leone team focused directly on addressing displacement risk, practices for promoting active and meaningful participation and access to information are drawn primarily from the Freetown context. The Freetown City Profile describes work to strengthen community-based disaster management committees, the local entities in charge of emergency preparedness for response. These committees work to change local behaviours through sensitization activities and campaigns, fostering safer practices to reduce risk. They respond to emergencies and support community resilience by enhancing skills and knowledge on different emergencies and strengthening preparedness and response capacity.

Reaching the wider community, the SLRCS uses experiences from radio discussion programs, community theatre, focus group discussions, workshops, and mobile cinema to engage communities in disaster risk reduction and health promotion. It establishes two-way communication systems for communities to voice their needs, priorities, and feedback.

Substantial work goes towards strengthening access to information in the immediate context of early warning. The SLRCS has supported the collaborative design of early warning systems in Kroo Bay that build on community networks. The approach includes the creation of water banks with layered sticks and boards indicating water levels. This simple system informs when to alert relevant authorities like the SLRCS and the Freetown City Council when evacuation is necessary.



Concerning the experience of pastoralists in the Nairobi metropolitan area, there are formal platforms that engage with authorities, although pastoralists would like to see their voices have greater weight in decision-making.



## Conclusions and recommendations

The City Profiles contain recommendations that are tailored to the specific circumstances of each context. A consolidation of these recommendations, and broader reflections generated over the duration of the programme, highlight cross-cutting priorities, including:

### Root causes of rural-urban migration

The City Profiles do not explore the rate or scale of rural-urban migration in any depth, although all acknowledge how their cities are expanding rapidly, owing in large part to increasing numbers of people moving into municipal areas. The City Profiles do not proclaim the need to halt this trend, nor could they achieve such an aim. However, to the extent that movement into cities reflects decisions taken as a result of economic and environmental pressures, there is a need to address underlying root causes and dynamic pressures. This kind of work is best undertaken under the framework of national development and climate change adaptation plans in collaboration with regional actors like the African Union, as well as the wider international community.

One dimension of this phenomenon that does fall within municipality competence, however, concerns the way cities expand into peri-urban and more rural areas. The Nairobi City Profile highlights how urban expansion directly impacts pastoralist livelihoods and adaptation strategies, and municipality development planning and climate change adaptation strategies should reflect consideration of how urban expansion impacts (im)mobility, including trends that see increasing numbers of pastoralists abandoning traditional cattle-based livelihoods in favour of urban-based income generating activities.

### Infrastructure and ecosystem-sensitive land use planning

All of the City Profiles highlight infrastructure as a key factor that contributes to displacement risk within the municipality. The priority here is to address practices of disaster risk creation, including poorly planned urban expansion as well as specific construction projects that fail to address downstream rainwater runoff hazards. It is in this context that the accountability dimension of a human rights-based approach assumes most prominence, as downstream harm can be attributed to acts or omissions of identifiable actors. There is a role in this context for both civil litigation as well as work led by national human rights



institutions.


Construction and maintenance of urban drainage systems emerges as perhaps the most critical aspect of infrastructure and ecosystem-sensitive land use planning. As noted in all City Profiles, existing drains are routinely blocked by solid waste, contributing directly and significantly to flood-related displacement risk, particularly in informal settlements. Improving inadequate solid waste collection measures presents as one significant opportunity for reducing displacement risk in this context. Construction of additional infrastructure carries significant risks of development-related displacement as homes are demolished to make room for new projects. Further, particularly where settlements occupy protected wetlands, as is the case in Kampala, further infrastructure development pushes the boundaries of the competing priorities of protecting residents of informal settlements, and preventing further development in already stressed protected areas.

Finally, the predicament engendered by urban expansion into land traditionally used for grazing or livestock transhumance can only be addressed through participatory land use planning that takes into account the specific situation of indigenous pastoralist communities. Alternatives or adaptations to pastoralist livelihoods are identified in the Nairobi City Profile, but most reflect serious threats to the right to culture protected under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### **Governing disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for response**

Although many municipal budget lines are relevant to addressing displacement risk, specific budget lines for disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for response are inadequate for the scale of the challenge described in the City Profiles. Local authorities should ensure that part of the municipal budget is allocated specifically to disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for response. Important contributions can be made by more systematically integrating disaster risk into other sectoral programmes, such as solid waste management, community development, and infrastructure initiatives such as road and water projects.

Substantial gains can also be made through increasing partnerships between local authorities and national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, which specialize in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for response. The Freetown City Profile reflects the expertise of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, and the value they contribute to national and municipal work on disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for response, including in relation to early warning and evacuation. The Kampala City Profile also highlights ongoing collaboration with the Uganda Red Cross Society.



Strengthening platforms for interaction with wider civil society engaged in these matters also expands opportunities for impact at scale. Although synergies can be achieved through aligning initiatives within national or municipal priorities, space also needs to be created for civil society actors to pursue initiatives that are locally-led based on realities on the ground.

Substantial work remains to be done to strengthen the protection of people during displacement, as authorities do not have measures in place to monitor what happens to people forced from their homes in the context of disasters. Further, evacuation centres are informal and ad-hoc, exposing people to gender-based violence as well as other forms of harm resulting from inadequate planning for people with mobility, sight or auditory impairments or other disabilities.

### **Active and meaningful participation taking into account the knowledge and perspectives of local people**

The City Profiles reflect a commitment on the part of local authorities to deliver services within their mandates, where community development officers, in partnership with civil society and international organizations invest heavily in reaching people in situations of vulnerability, including in informal settlements and amongst pastoralist communities exposed to drought. However, the specific issue of disaster risk does not emerge as a distinct priority area alongside familiar projects relating to income generation, education and water, hygiene and sanitation. Engaging existing networks in community-based disaster risk reduction will provide a context for improving the knowledge of local authorities about the kinds of challenges people living in informal settlements and exposed pastoralist communities face, as well as ideas and concrete proposals for how to address them. Multiple interests will compete in this space, and finding solutions to complex and growing challenges at the intersection of climate change and sustainable urban development necessarily entails difficult political decisions. A commitment to collaborative definition of problems and potential solutions promises improved outcomes, even as the scale of the challenges facing people living in situations of heightened exposure and vulnerability to climate and disaster risk in urban areas can appear staggering.

This also includes a civic education component that is highlighted in the City Profiles, and this dimension relates to the access to information dimension of the FIRE Framework. People need to know the nature of risks they face and to be supported to take practical steps to reduce exposure and vulnerability. Local authorities can play a leadership role in this context by introducing disaster and displacement risk into development dialogues with communities, including through producing accessible information materials in for-

mats adapted to the diverse communities they serve.

## Research

Finally, the City Profiles highlight the importance of in-depth, participatory action research that brings together the voices and perspectives not only of local authorities but also of people living in areas where they are exposed to displacement risk. Although engagement with academia, civil society and local people fell outside the particular scope of the Public Sector Innovation Programme that supported this initiative, new projects should retain the multi-sectoral ambition reflected in the City Profiles whilst expanding the range of engaged stakeholders. Academic partnerships with researchers with expertise in areas like town planning, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, community development and urban governance should be pursued in the interests of improving understanding of, amongst other subjects:

- Differential exposure and vulnerability to displacement risk – taking into account the situation of persons with disabilities, migrants from both within and outside of the country, children, older people, and others. An intersectional gender perspective is crucial in this context
- Barriers to implementation of national and municipal legal and policy frameworks
- Potential sources of finance to address recommendations in the City Profiles as well as recommendations emerging from future participatory action research

The issue of urban displacement risk is growing in line with processes like rural-urban migration, urban expansion and climate change. Local authorities in Nairobi, Kampala and Freetown are taking steps to address the phenomenon, but lack resources and capacity to address the multiple, intersecting challenges described in the City Profiles and summarized in this report. In line with calls echoed in Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, action to address this growing challenge must be multi-level, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder. This report has shown how adopting a human rights and gender-equal approach contributes towards the systematic analysis of the problem, and provides some principles and guidelines relevant to work towards solutions. As more people are concentrated in situations of vulnerability in increasingly exposed urban areas, pursuing a rights-based and gender equal approach to addressing urban disaster displacement could not be more relevant or timely.



### **About Raoul Wallenberg Institute**

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law is an independent academic institution founded in 1984 at the Faculty of Law, Lund University, Sweden. The Institute is named after the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, in order to honour his work in the cause of humanity. Our mission is to promote universal respect for human rights and humanitarian law by means of research, academic education and institutional development programmes.