



Climate Displacement in African Cities

Freetown City Profile

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Climate displacement in African cities: Freetown city profile

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An electronic version of this report, as well as more information about the project, plus profiles from other African cities, is available here: <https://rwi.lu.se/climate-displacement-in-african-cities/>

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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 number 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 C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration calls upon a wide range of actors to contribute to building resilience and promoting the inclusion of people (at risk of being) displaced in cities in the context of disasters and climate change.

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.”

Taking the initiative in response to these global processes, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society entered into collaboration 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 within informal settlements in Freetown.

The project, part of a Public Sector Innovation Program supported by the Swedish Institute, 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. More information about FIRE is available on the Raoul Wallenberg Institute website: <https://rwi.lu.se/fire/>.



Figure 1: The FIRE Framework

The City Profile is structured according to the six dimensions of the FIRE Framework, although non-discrimination, social norms and context, and agency and empowerment have been combined into one section that addresses differential exposure, vulnerability and capabilities broadly. The informal settlement of Kroo Bay is in focus throughout the profile to exemplify the many challenges relating to displacement within the city.

The problem

Despite its rich history and significant role in the national economy, Freetown has suffered from inadequate city planning. The lack of efficient land use and various other infrastructural deficits have threatened the quality of life for the city's inhabitants. Furthermore, the city's resilience to environmental threats such as flooding and landslides has been undermined, causing significant displacement, particularly among people in situations of vulnerability.



Freetown's population has been rapidly expanding, especially since the civil war when the city's population tripled. The combination of rural-to-urban migration driven by economic growth and natural population increase has continued to bolster population numbers since 2001. This has led to increased resource demand and the creation of informal settlements in areas exposed to hazards. Many of these settlements are located in environmental risk zones such as along river channels and in coastal areas and hillsides. The indiscriminate deforestation for settlement expansion, coupled with unregulated construction activities, has exacerbated these environmental risks. The city's geography, characterized by being surrounded by hills and the ocean, compounds these development challenges, particularly for informal settlements.

The Freetown City Council (FCC) officially recognizes 27 slums and informal settlements as prone to disasters. Kroo Bay community being the largest slum settlement is the focus for this City Profile. It is one of several indentations formed along the city's western coast-

line and is fed by the main stream of George Brook and the minor stream of High Bay Brook. These streams originate from the Peninsula Mountains south of Freetown. Kroo Bay is bounded to the west by the King Tom Peninsula and to the east by the Government Wharf. The community has over 2000 households with approximately 18,000 inhabitants and an annual population growth rate of 15%. (BRAC Slum Mapping Report, 2014)

Despite the prevalence of fishing, petty trading, and other activities, the community is beset by high levels of crime, prostitution, teenage pregnancy, and other social issues, primarily due to unemployment among the youth. Solid waste disposal is a major challenge and the high incidence of blocked drains contributes to Kroo Bay's susceptibility to flooding. These issues disproportionately affect women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The inadequate provision of basic social amenities such as housing, livelihood, water, sanitation, and health facilities reflect the unmet needs of the community.



Differential exposure, vulnerability and capabilities

Disasters occur when natural hazards interact with social conditions of exposure and vulnerability. Vulnerability arises from wider social, economic, and political conditions, which result in unsafe living conditions. People in this situation often live under conditions where access to services like education, healthcare, and secure livelihood options is limited, resulting in poverty, poor health, and unsafe living conditions. The impacts of disasters are not uniform, with socially disadvantaged groups such as children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities most affected.

Social norms, which are the informal, generally unwritten rules dictating acceptable actions within a community, guide human behavior. Social norms can either benefit or harm people's well-being, playing a crucial role in establishing and maintaining social order. They are essential for communities and societies to function, as they promote collective behaviors. However, these norms can sometimes support harmful social structures, perpetuating unequal power dynamics and fostering discrimination and gender inequality.

Gender norms dictate societal expectations about appropriate behaviors for men and women. Although these norms are socially constructed, biological differences are often used to justify these expectations. Climate change and gender inequality present significant challenges, threatening livelihoods, health, safety, and security for women and girls globally. In slum communities, women outnumber men, as men often travel to seek livelihoods elsewhere. Women and girls in flood-prone areas like Kuro Bay are particularly vulnerable during disasters, facing risks of violence and discrimination, including gender-based violence (GBV). Some media houses and CSOs alleged that women and girls resorted to sex trade for food during the 2017 mudslide response though there is no confirmed data to substantiate the report. However, women generally shoulder the burden of securing food, water, and childcare during disasters.

A significant proportion of women in these areas are petty traders and heads of households, but do not own homes. Their socio-economic status is generally low, which heightens their vulnerability to gender-based violence and other risks, especially in the aftermath of disaster.

Women play critical roles as heads of households, which comes with its unique challenges during disasters. Due to their caregiving role and societal expectations, they are often the last to evacuate during emergencies, putting their lives at risk. They prioritize rescuing elderly or sick family members, and gathering essential household items, which often get them trapped.

Social norms also limit women's participation in decision-making, contributing to their vulnerability during disasters. These restrictions even affect their ability to access accommodation during displacement. Pregnant or lactating women and elderly women face more significant challenges during evacuations due to their physical state or the caregiving role.

Persons with disabilities also face challenges during displacement, usually being the last to evacuate. Poverty exacerbates these vulnerabilities, making survival a struggle for individuals with no marketable skills, education, opportunities or basic services. Even though 'Free Healthcare and Education' are available, they often fail to cater to the unique needs of persons with disabilities. In addition, some inhabitants are not as vulnerable as others. Therefore, it is always important to see the diversity within informal settlements, rather than approaching all inhabitants as a collective of 'vulnerable people'.



Governance systems and structures

4.1 Legal and Policy Framework

Sierra Leone has made significant progress in developing its climate policy portfolio since 2007. The nation has developed the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), National Climate Change Policy, National Climate Change Strategy Action Plan (NCCSAP), a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and three National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In addition, Sierra Leone has initiated its National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which includes a NAP Framework and a NAP Communications Plan. Other relevant documents and policies include the National Environmental Policy, National Environmental Action Plan, Environmental Protection Agency Act, Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency Act, National Disaster and Risk Management Policy, National Drought Management Plan, National Land Degradation Neutrality target setting process, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan, and the National Gender Strategic Plan.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) was established as an auxiliary to the government. In collaboration with national and international partners (including Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement), the SLRCS continue to carry out disaster reduction activities such as mitigating and managing hazards. SLRCS also provides support to community-based disaster response structures to strengthen their response capacities.

At the sub-national level, the Local Councils and the SLRCS play significant roles in local governance and disaster management. Operations at this level adhere to national legal frameworks, and they are tailored for effective implementation in the local context.

4.2 Budgets, capacity and resources

While financial, human, and institutional resources are essential for implementing climate actions for adaptation and mitigation, there are no specific budget allocations from the government for addressing climate change and only a limited budget for disaster response. The government is on the verge of establishing a climate finance unit in the Ministry of Finance to lead on climate finance mobilization.

However, Freetown City Council has made strides to secure external financial resources. This is achieved through property rate reform, private sector partnerships, funding from targeted development partners, city-to-city networks, securing donations from philanthropists, and the diaspora. Additionally, FCC is exploring options such as municipal bonds,

diaspora bonds, results-based financing schemes, and the development of an impact investment plan. Despite these efforts, financial limitations still present a significant challenge. Hence, Freetown will require international financial assistance in addition to domestic funding from the national government budget and the private sector to adequately address climate change impacts.

Notably, the FCC's limited capacity poses difficulties in integrating interventions into urban planning and budgeting. This includes conducting city-level research, collecting sectoral data, risk modelling, vulnerability assessment, and developing investable projects. To enhance the city's resilience to climate change, the FCC plans to strengthen its human resources across all sectorial units. This will be achieved through capacity building measures such as research, recruitment, education and training. In addition, fostering sub-national ownership, capacity building efforts through networking, partnerships, and experience-sharing is deemed crucial for lasting impact.

4.3 Institutionalized platforms for civil society

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Sierra Leone include non-governmental organizations, professional associations, foundations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, social movements, and labour unions. Government has made substantial efforts to provide the public climate information through media outlets and civil society organizations (CSOs). However, according to one of the CSOs (Green Scenery), the public still cannot access key information on renewable energy, forest restoration, sustainable transport, green buildings and other policy goals, and thus track Government-led climate effort (Sierra Leone National Action Plan, 2016 – 2018 Mid-Term Report, 2017).

Religion plays a vital role during disasters in Sierra Leone. As Islam and Christianity are the dominant religions, faith leaders can influence resilience and adaptation. Sierra Leone boasts religious tolerance, and its “Inter-Religious Council” provides administrative and governance leadership. Given their influence, religious leaders can effectively contribute to disaster prevention, mitigation, and adaptation. Therefore, it is essential to collaborate with them in disaster risk reduction efforts.

While considerable progress has been made in empowering communities to recognize risks and develop resilient solutions, more action is needed.

4.4 Accountability, transparency and access to justice

The National Government through the local councils including the FCC has taken steps towards enhancing accountability and transparency by publishing quarterly Statements of Account, engaging communities, radio and television talk shows to keep citizens informed, sensitized and updated on activities. Similarly, for projects led directly by the FCC, suitable key performance indicators are identified before implementation. The process of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on key program targets is ongoing, and outcomes are tailored, whenever possible, to specific target audiences. There is also a focus on developing, integrating, and monitoring demographic-specific indicators and co-benefit indicators like air quality and job creation. Another key area identified for improvement is the establishment of a contingency fund for disaster response and an increase in national budget allocation for disaster response. This will ensure that immediate and effective actions are taken when disasters strike.

A key principle of human rights law is that states have an obligation to protect people from foreseeable harm, but the extent of this obligation depends on the resources available to the government. However, assigning responsibility for flood-related harm in Kroo Bay is difficult given the complexity of this situation, as the government has attempted relocation initiatives which have been unsuccessful, and available options to reduce flood risk are limited. Engineering works have been attempted but flooding continues. The situation does not necessarily raise clear issues of accountability provided the relevant authorities are taking steps to the maximum of available resources.

Fundamental rights

Almost sixty years ago, the international community acknowledged the right to adequate housing and ‘continuous improvement of living conditions’ by adopting the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to adequate housing has increasingly garnered international attention, including from human rights treaty bodies, regional human rights mechanisms, and the Human Rights Council.

According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adequate housing must meet several criteria:

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

The flooding situation in Kroo Bay has a significant impact on housing. As one resident of Kroo Bay in Freetown explained, “Our houses are inadequate, and we have no place to take shelter when it floods. After the flood subsides, the next disaster is disease affecting mainly children, women, and the elderly in the community.”

Most households are cramped in limited spaces, with an average of 4 people per household. The inadequacy of housing is evident, impacting equity, inclusion, health, safety, and livelihood opportunities. Housing conditions in Kroo Bay suffer from inadequacy due to a lack of tenure security. Residents lack legal protection against forced evictions, harassment, and other threats. Evictions do occur, typically initiated by the city council and Road Transport Authority, particularly when structures are built on roadways or in disaster-prone areas. However, these evictions often lack proper planning and provision for relocated individuals, leading to further hardship for those affected. The lack of legislation exposes tenants, predominantly women, to abrupt eviction.

However, reflecting the complexity of the situation, security of tenure does not appear as the clear solution for people living in serious conditions of exposure and vulnerability in Kroo Bay. Serious efforts to improve drainage infrastructure have been made, but the area remains flood-prone. Authorities will not issue permits for people to live in such a dangerous location.

Housing inadequacy also stems from the lack of basic services like safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and energy access. Inadequate waste management and toilet services in Kroo Bay suggest a potential epidemic risk, undermining the right to adequate housing. There is no clear way out of the current challenge without improvements to waste management including clearing major drainages that are clogged across the city.

Housing affordability in Kroo Bay is compromised. Housing along rivers and streams, where flood risk is high, tends to be cheaper, attracting the poorest residents. The risk to life and assets posed by these locations undermines residents' enjoyment of other human rights.

Housing in Kroo Bay lacks the necessary conditions for habitability. Houses offer limited space, cramming an average of four people into small shacks. The persistent threat of flooding, exacerbated by unchecked waste disposal into watercourses, contributes to the high risk of waterborne diseases and structural damage, undermining residents' physical safety and health. The physical vulnerability of these homes can be attributed to the lack of local technical expertise. Most homeowners rely on untrained, ill-equipped masons for construction, leading to buildings that do not meet necessary safety standards and are at risk from floods, fire, and wind disasters.



The houses, often made from sheets, are not firmly built and lack a solid foundation, making them prone to damage or even destruction by floods. This leads to the loss of property and displacement of families.

Despite being a bustling slum close to the city centre with various socio-economic activities, Kroo Bay lacks adequate employment opportunities. Most income sources are outside the settlement, and many residents rely on remittances. While the settlement has a community health center and schools, most residents are unable to save, suggesting limited income turnover. The increasing prevalence of digital transactions, however, is an encouraging sign. Proximity to livelihood activities and social services provides incentives for people to live in Kroo Bay, despite the hazards they face.

When people are displaced in the context of disasters, they typically find themselves sheltering in the national stadium, or in tents provided by the SLRCS and other actors. Further work is required to bring conditions in evacuation centres and temporary shelters up to international standards. Major challenges people face during displacement include access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene, access to food, and protection of their right to health, taking into account all dimensions of that right.

The most effective approach to post-disaster housing so far has been temporary evacuation centers such as schools, churches or stadia. However, these spaces often lack adequate facilities, are overcrowded and can lead to disease outbreaks. Government provision of rented places has been limited.

Many residents claim a form of informal ownership in these settlements, often creating habitable spaces by pushing back water and subsequently renting out these spaces. This kind of ownership discourages relocation, as many settlers profit from renting out these properties. In some cases, private initiatives, such as the company Home Leone, have attempted to provide affordable housing and job opportunities, but these efforts often face resistance from inhabitants unwilling to leave their current communities.

In meeting the requirements of the right to adequate housing, the focus should be ‘to take the slum out of the people and not the people out of the slum’ as this will reduce their exposure and vulnerability. The poor can still stay in less exposed areas if they are provided with services of agency and empowerment in areas like leadership and decision making, skills training, entrepreneurship and affordable social amenities.

Relocation

The National Development Induced Resettlement Act, 2022 is a law enacted by parliament to introduce uniform principles to guide the planning, implementation and monitoring of development induced resettlement activities and to provide for related matters. This law is the umbrella framework that ensures that citizens are protected from involuntary resettlement, avoid forced eviction, mitigate unavoidable adverse social and economic impacts from land acquisition or restrictions on land use by providing timely compensation for loss of assets at replacement cost and assisting displaced persons in their efforts to improve, or at least restore, their livelihoods and living standards, in real terms, to pre-displacement levels, and improve living conditions of poor or vulnerable persons who are physically displaced through provision of adequate housing, access to services and facilities, and security of tenure. This Act is highly relevant to people living in informal settlements facing displacement risk, as well as (forced) relocation, and research to examine implementation over time should be conducted.

Past experience of relocation highlights the myriad human rights challenges. On 14 August 2017, flash floods and a mudslide left an estimated 500 people dead and caused widespread destruction. An estimated 3,000 people are thought to have been affected, with an additional 600 still thought to be missing according to reports from the BBC. In 2015 also, torrential rains lead to serious flooding that damaged homes and properties in Freetown. 14,000 people were affected and 10 were reported dead.

Local and international organizations were quick to comment following the terrible aftermath of the twin disaster. Amnesty International's Deputy Director of Global Issues, Makmid Kamara grimly illustrated the human cost of the government's failure to implement housing and land policies. Another critic points to the lack of enforcement of land acquisition laws and government's inability to stop deforestation as key factors contributing to these types of disasters. Civil society activists pointed to the lack of regulation and insufficient enforcement capacity, and the lack of political will in respecting minimum environmental rights for citizens as some of the reasons why tens of thousands of people continue to live in very dangerous and vulnerable communities in Freetown.

Responding to some of these issues the then Mayor of Freetown, Franklyn Bode Gibson, explained on national television that most of what happened could be managed, but went further to say that people building in water ways, banking drainages for housing con-

struction contributed to this problem. Presidential Spokesman, Abdulai Bayraytay, also stated that even though all fingers were pointing to the government, “people also have a responsibility to protect their own lives by not staying in places that can endanger their families.”

While food, medicine, other supplies and financial aid from internal and external partners keep streaming into accounts set up for survivors of the disaster, the government thought a permanent relocation plan was the answer to prevent a future re-occurrence of the problem. However, the flood victims of 2015 ended up spending months at the national stadium receiving treatment and support from international and local agencies before the government finally relocated about 10,000 people to a makeshift community in Mile 6 just outside Freetown.

Victims of the 2015 flood disaster from Kroo Bay and other slum areas, particularly women and children, when relocated, faced indirect discrimination with many losing access to education, information and all that was promised which failed to meet the minimum standards for life and dignity. Many suffered further due to lost or destroyed documentation. Many of the people who were relocated to Mile 6 were forced to return to their disaster-prone communities as they could not stand the challenges of living in the community without education for their children, health, food, water, and electricity supply.

Despite the dangers, the inhabitants are reluctant to move away from Kroo Bay because the community is located in Freetown, where they have established livelihoods, businesses, and schools. The inadequate lighting at Mile 6 also made women and girls vulnerable to GBV and discouraged the use of latrines at night.

There is also a lack of political will to forcefully relocate the community, with fears of losing subsequent elections.



Participation and access to information

The rights to information and expression are crucial human rights, as they underpin all other rights and are pivotal to human development. These rights become particularly important in a disaster context, where timely and relevant information can save lives, ensure the effectiveness of assistance, and preserve human dignity. After a disaster, access to information is vital for various reasons, such as:

- Reducing loss of life and panic
- Guiding individuals on accessing essential services
- Enabling contact with relatives and friends
- Aiding in the search for the missing and ensuring appropriate burial for the deceased
- Providing an avenue for grief and counseling
- Overseeing assistance activities and preventing corruption
- Facilitating two-way communication between aid providers and affected communities

Recognizing information as vital for effective disaster management, it is essential to communicate accurately during disasters to prevent underestimating potential risks and damages. Regular communication of preparedness and safety information allows communities to make informed decisions, thereby reducing disaster-related casualties.

Access to reliable information enables residents of Kroo Bay and other flood-prone areas to be aware of the risks and prepare accordingly. There is a wealth of information available for this purpose but accessing and integrating it for decision-making remains challenging. Improving national or international networks for quicker access to better information could significantly enhance the situation.

Broadcasters and other media outlets are pivotal in circulating vital information before, during, and after disasters. This group includes wireless and fixed service providers, satellite providers, public safety radio networks, television and radio broadcasters, and internet service providers. A significant proportion of Sierra Leone's population, especially older generations, place their trust in traditional media over social media. Consequently, the SLRCS utilizes regular radio and television discussion programs to share pertinent disaster-related information. These programs, run in collaboration with national and international partners, offer guidance on aid provision, evacuation procedures, shelter, and other forms of livelihood support, helping to dispel rumors and misinformation.

Sierra Leone's National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) has developed an early

warning system to provide timely and valuable warning information. This tool helps individuals, communities like Kroo Bay, and organizations to act appropriately in time, minimizing harm or loss. It requires awareness of risks, surveillance, analysis and forecasting of hazards, alert dissemination, and readiness to act on received warnings. A toll-free Line (1199) facilitates alerts to the NDMA.

To bolster the early warning system's effectiveness, NDMA created a Community-Based Early Warning System (CBEWS). Managed by the community, this system empowers at-risk individuals and communities to respond in sufficient time to hazards, thereby reducing personal injury, loss of life, property damage, and environmental harm.



The CBEWS approach relies on community engagement, fostering local resources and capacities to prepare for, respond to, and reduce vulnerability to disasters. This community-centric focus, as exemplified by organizations like the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, ensures community members are aware of potential dangers, can communicate changes, and are prepared to act swiftly when a threat arises.

The SLRCS concentrates its disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives on strengthening community-based disaster management committees (CBDMCs), the local entities in charge of emergency preparedness and response. These committees work to change local behaviors 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.

In June 2023, SLRCS initiated the Integrated Resilient Program (IRP), aligned with both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP). This led to training and mentorship of community-based disaster management groups, focusing on preparedness, prevention, and response to disasters.

Community engagement and accountability are vital for successful DRR or community resilience. 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.

Social media platforms are valuable outlets for participation and information access. Platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Skype, TikTok, Snapchat, etc., are utilized to share event updates, enabling more people to be informed and prepared. SLRCS uses these platforms for public engagement on disaster risk reduction, climate change, human rights, and gender issues. However, it is essential to consider challenges such as data accuracy, privacy concerns, and reachability to at-risk, vulnerable populations. Despite these hurdles, social media's significant potential for disaster preparedness and response cannot be understated.

Efforts have been made by humanitarian organizations such as SLRCS and Catholic Relief Service to provide training in early warning signs for floods and organize temporary shelters in case of emergencies. Early warning systems (EWS) have been established in several communities, which included 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 FCC when evacuation is necessary. A color-coding system has been established to indicate the severity of the situation, with red signaling the need for evacuation. Additionally, evacuation drills have been conducted in several areas to prepare residents for potential disasters. There were instances when communities were caught off guard by floods due to a lack of monitoring, leading to challenging evacuations. However, community youth often mobilize swiftly to assist the most vulnerable, forming human bridges to help them navigate flooded areas.

There have also been attempts to leverage more modern methods of EWS, including targeted community messaging via mobile service providers. However, this approach has faced challenges as most of the community members, particularly people in situations of vulnerability, such as the elderly, children, and women, are illiterate, lack mobile phones, or don't have access to the latest technology.

While platforms like WhatsApp are increasingly used to spread information swiftly, they are not as effective in these communities due to the reasons stated above. Hence, reliance is still primarily on traditional social networks.

Volunteers are integral to their disaster response strategy, with 24-hour hotlines and WhatsApp groups comprising volunteers, the National Disaster Management Group, and other partners. These volunteers live within the communities they serve and provide immediate alerts when disasters are imminent. SLRCS Volunteers utilize megaphones to spread warnings quickly, as houses in these communities are closely built, facilitating rapid information dissemination.

The combination of EWS, disaster preparedness training, and strong community networks has helped minimize loss of life during disasters. Where people are unable or unwilling to leave homes in exposed areas, strengthening early warning and evacuation capabilities is crucial for protecting life.



Conclusions and recommendations

Addressing differential exposure, vulnerability and capabilities

1. Effectively implement laws that promote equal access to essential services including Health Care and Education
2. Ensure that resettlement activities are planned and implemented with appropriate disclosure of information, meaningful consultation, and the informed participation of those affected.
3. Financial Inclusion through appropriate agency and empowerment programs

Governance systems and structures

4. Practitioners in human rights and gender equality, particularly within the context of climate change disaster displacement, need to collaborate and increase their knowledge regarding the right to disaster protection. They should assist those at risk or affected to claim their rights to protection from duty-bearers.
5. Investments in DRR should include creating more resistant buildings, ensuring fire-safe environments, increasing food security, and enhancing disaster risk awareness at the local level. A significant portion of state funding for relief should be redirected toward disaster risk reduction.
6. The international community should provide more funding for adaptation to climate change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030 mantra “Leave No One Behind”, which aligns with the FIRE Framework.

Fundamental rights

7. Disaster risk reduction strategies should be based on a rights-based approach
8. Develop a community friendly version of the National Development Induced Resettlement Act, 2022



Participation and access to information

9. Strengthen CBEWS through trainings, monitoring and shared learning

10. In addition to the existence of a toll-free line (1199), FCC should establish climate change complaint/grievance redress desks for disaster affected persons as most vulnerable cannot afford mobile phones.

The background of the page is a solid pink color. It features several large, overlapping, wavy shapes in shades of orange and yellow, primarily on the left side and bottom right corner. The shapes are soft-edged and organic in form.

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.