Breaking Cycles of Risk Accumulation in African Cities





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King's College London



Professor Mark Pelling

The world is currently going through a significant demographic transformation whereby, between 1950 and 2050, the global population majority is shifting from 70 per cent rural to 70 per cent urban. This transition also means that ever more economic activity, urban assets and invested capital are concentrated in urban areas. Although there are significant benefits in concentrating people, activities and assets for reasons of economies of scale, these same concentrations also produce less beneficial outcomes.

Many of the problems associated with dense urban concentrations are well known, varying from intense local concentrations of poverty to soil, air and water pollution and it is now increasingly acknowledged that communities are becoming more susceptible to hazard risks. A major tropical storm, earthquake or flood hitting a large city can lead to a great loss of life, damage to infrastructure and homes, as well as severely disrupted economic activity.

But major catastrophes and disasters are not the only threat. On a day-to-day basis, lesser events such as fires, landslides or infectious diseases, and also small disasters like flooding or intense weather phenomena are having an impact. It is often the poor and other vulnerable groups of society that are most susceptible to everyday hazards and small disasters because they are typically less served by protective infrastructures or because they live in the more hazardous areas of cities. They are also more vulnerable since there is simply insufficient information about how urban communities can improve their risk resilience.

In an effort to raise awareness of this, particularly of the plight of the more vulnerable segments of the urban population in sub-Saharan Africa, King's College London established Urban Africa: Risk Knowledge (Urban ARK), with funding from the UK Department for International Development and the Economic and Social Research Council. This three-year research and capacity-building programme was led by 12 policy and academic organisations from across sub-Saharan Africa, with partnerships in the United Kingdom. The work was concentrated in four core cities with different development and hazard contexts: Ibadan (Nigeria), Karonga (Malawi), Nairobi (Kenya) and Niamey (Niger). Further research has been undertaken in Freetown (Sierra Leone), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Mombasa (Kenya), Dakar (Senegal) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

The activities of Urban ARK resulted in numerous policy briefs, academic papers, new datasets and policy advisories, which can be found on the programme website www.urbanark.org. This work has been synthesised into key thematic chapters which have been compiled in this publication. The book seeks to provide guidance and insight on how participation by urban communities in all aspects of risk response, mitigation and prevention can be achieved while improving cooperation with local authorities and other actors in urban risk management.

This publication covers a range of disaster risk management (DRM) themes, from community participation in DRM data collection to risk mapping and from urban waste management to hazard accumulation in urban risk traps. Yet it is only a start in the vast amount of research that is still required to prepare for, mitigate and ultimately prevent the multiple risks that affect so many inhabitants of sub-Saharan cities in general, and the most vulnerable among them in particular.

Professor Mark Pelling

Lead Scientist for Urban Africa: Risk Knowledge

UN-Habitat



Mathias Spaliviero

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was invited to be part of the Urban Africa: Risk Knowledge programme funded by the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council and Department for International Development (DfID). The programme, which concluded in 2018 and which serves as the basis for this book, represents a commendable effort in gathering together cutting-edge knowledge on a range of cities and drivers of disaster risk in sub-Saharan Africa. growth. Much of this urban expansion is taking place against a background of poor planning and management capacity as well as weak financial mechanisms at the local level, resulting in growing informal settlements characterised by poor living conditions and a lack of access to basic services and infrastructure. Urban risks are exacerbated by the increasing severity and unpredictability of the effects of climate change.

UN-Habitat is driving resilience-building efforts through several initiatives across sub-Saharan Africa and has developed tools for this purpose. The City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP) set up in 2012 provides national and local governments with tools for measuring and increasing resilience to multihazard impacts, including those associated with climate change. These tools are being used in Maputo, Mozambique as well as several cities in other regions of the world. The City Resilience Action Planning (CityRAP) Tool enables municipal technicians in low-capacity cities to conduct a quick and effective assessment of the city's vulnerabilities to help prepare a Resilience Framework for Action (RFA). It targets small to medium limited-capacity cities which have little data available and focuses on improving local solutions. It has been implemented in 30 cities in the region.

UN-Habitat engages in normative work to increase resilience building, and it is hence a pleasure to present this book, which is both policy and practice oriented, and which seeks to serve as a contribution to creating more

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