

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: 13 – Architecture, Built Environment and Planning		
Title of case study: Strengthening institutions in the Global South to address urgent development challenges: co-production of research and policy in Somaliland and Sierra Leone		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Michael Walls	Professor of Development Politics and Economy	Please provide 2004-present
Andrea Rigon	Associate Professor	2012-present
Alexandre Apsan Frediani	Associate Professor	2008-present
Amina-Bahja Ekman	Research Assistant	2016- 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Research in the Bartlett into political institutions has stimulated partnerships with authorities in Somaliland and Sierra Leone to co-produce equitable approaches to policymaking and governance, and build capacity for research-driven planning interventions to address poverty and unemployment.</p> <p>As a result, municipal and national governments in these countries are better equipped to formulate locally-relevant policies to address national and urban social justice, climate risk and conflict reduction. Specific impacts can be tracked in: i) recognition of gender politics in Somaliland; ii) fairer election processes in Somaliland; and, iii) Sierra Leone's informal settlements, arising out of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC).</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Researchers in The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) set out to develop long-term and multi-faceted partnerships with research and policy-focused communities in Somaliland and Sierra Leone, to address national and urban social justice, climate risk, conflict reduction and similarly urgent development challenges.</p> <p>Somaliland: Political stability and gender Professor Michael Walls' research on the political economy of the Somali Horn of Africa documented the emergence of a stable, yet internationally-unrecognised, state in the form of Somaliland. It detailed the country's transition to a multi-party democracy, and explored the Somalilanders' negotiation of nation-state politics and Somali custom and clan dynamics [a].</p> <p>In collaboration with Progressio, a non-governmental international development organisation working on gender and governance issues in fragile states, the research project 'Political Settlement in Somaliland: a gendered perspective', was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ES/M009041/1, 2015-17). Walls led on research designed to explore the relationships between political settlement and gender in Somaliland and aspects that pertain to peace-building, gender-based violence and the stability of the political settlement [b]. The research involved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. a review of documentary sources identifying the relationships between political settlement and gender and the aspects of that relationship that pertain to peace-building, gender-based violence and the stability of the political settlement; ii. a review of policy measures employed in Somaliland to promote greater gender inclusivity; 		

- iii. the collection of qualitative data throughout Somaliland over the course of a year.

This research found that clan-based justice is manifestly unjust in many cases of sexual violence, although it has supported Somaliland's peace effectively in many ways. The political settlement in Somaliland was therefore found to be stable, but non-inclusive in gender terms, so that UCL researchers made recommendations around election lists and legal processes which have since informed debates and policy in those areas [b].

Electoral Politics in Somaliland

In 2005, 2010, 2012 and 2017, Walls was Chief Observer (or Chef de Mission of International Election Observation Mission, IEOM) for international election observation missions to Somaliland. Drawing on data collected by 60 IEOM observers from 27 countries based in Somaliland co-authored research [c] provided an analysis of the 2017 Somaliland election for which there were 704,089 registered voters, with an 80.3% turnout rate. It informed the IEOM's subsequent report [d] which recommended steps to strengthen election processes, including that Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC) and government bolster legal bodies supervising campaigns and elections, improve civic education and training for polling staff, political parties and voters, and create a more transparent electoral process.

The Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre and research on informal settlements

Simultaneous research-driven partnerships were established in Sierra Leone (pop.: 7.8 million; c. 42.5% urban) when Comic Relief and the then Department for International Development (DFID - now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)) provided GBP840,636 funding to form the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) in 2015. SLURC was established as a collaboration between UCL and Njala University and is based in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. It aims to generate capacity building as well as research initiatives in cities across Sierra Leone focused on the wellbeing of residents of informal settlements. Key research priorities include urban health, urban livelihoods, vulnerability and resilience, land and housing, and urban mobility.

A primary focus for the centre has been Sierra Leone's informal settlements, resulting in two key publications co-authored by Rigon and Apsan Frediani [e] [f]. The latter paper, for example, focused on livelihood sectors in informal settlements, finding that some could cause environmental degradation. It recommended that livelihood alternatives are put in place, before discouraging participation in livelihoods that are not sustainable. SLURC policy input has also led to improvements in flood management and sanitation in slum communities.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- a) Walls, M. (2014). A Somali Nation-State: history, culture and Somaliland's political transition. Pisa: Ponte Invisibile. <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/992598/1>
- b) Walls, M., Schueller, M. -, L., & Ekman, A. -. B. (2017). Political settlement in Somaliland: a gendered perspective. London: UCL. <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1549387/1>
- c) Pegg, S., & Walls, M. (2018). Back on track? Somaliland after its 2017 presidential election. *African Affairs*, 117 (467), 326-337. <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1548956/7>; <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ady011>
- d) Walls, M., Heine, C., Klingel, A., Goggin, C., Farag, A., & Mwape, S. (2018). The limits of consensus? Report on the Somaliland Presidential Election, 13th November 2017. London: UCL <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1549383/1>; <https://bit.ly/3rZtrEk>
- e) Rigon, A., Koroma, B., Macarthy, J., & Apsan Frediani, A., 'The politics of urban management and planning in African cities.' In T. Binns, K. Lynch, E. Nel (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of African Development*. Abingdon: Routledge (2018). <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1563038/1>

f) Koroma, B. Rigon A, Walker J, Sellu S. A. 2018. Urban livelihoods in Freetown's Informal Settlements. Freetown: SLURC. <https://bit.ly/3bWCznx>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of this research can be seen in the vigorous debate on gender politics and electoral processes in Somaliland and in the adoption of recommendations by the National Electoral Commission while, in Sierra Leone, increased and more effective involvement of people living in informal settlements has supported key improvements in planning processes and decision-making.

4.1 Impact on gender politics in Somaliland

DPU's gender-focused research supported debate and civil action on increasing women's involvement in Somaliland politics. The research, notably [b], has influenced public debate on women's political leadership, by providing a new resource on the dynamics of politics, gender and clan relations in Somali society. It was cited in a statement by a founder of NAGAAD, Somaliland's leading umbrella organisation on women's rights, and now the executive director of Somaliland Women's Research and Action Group. They attested to the impact for women's rights organisations in Somaliland and more broadly, indicated that the approach was "like shedding more light on the situation of gender politics...it creates a new knowledge so that always gives you more information, more reliable data to base your work on" [1].

The founder and director of Hargeisa Cultural Centre stated that UCL's research on political settlement and women's political leadership had strengthened the relationship between institutions in Somaliland, forming what he called "an important bridge" by raising awareness, and through cooperation and participation, including informing international partners on development programmes. They stated "the research has also helped to develop and create debate in different sectors. For sure, the gender issue was really important", along with the intergenerational gap [2].

In 2017, owing to his expertise in Somaliland politics and gender Professor Walls was invited at the request of the UK's Department for International Development to collaborate with Social Development Direct (SDD) on new policy-oriented research on the nature and potential for Somali women's leadership across Somali and Somaliland. The work of SDD focuses on building inclusive societies in which people of all genders and identities are valued and empowered to make choices about their own development. The organisation is a leading provider of high-quality, innovative and expert social development assistance and research services. This collaboration led to internal changes for the organisation. As a former Senior Technical Specialist at SDD stated, "Internally it helped to pave the way for SDD to deepen and develop its portfolio on WPE (women's political empowerment), including in fragile and conflict-affected settings" [3]. In turn, Walls' expertise and the findings from [b] shaped SDD's influence over DFID's strategic vision. As the former Senior Technical Specialist at SDD commented, "Professor Walls' research filled an important evidence gap on issues of gender, inclusion and women's political participation and leadership in the Somalia and Somaliland context, and was leveraged to open up dialogue with a number of relevant stakeholders across civil society and government [...] It opened up specific discussion with [DFID] on their approach to WPE (women's political empowerment), and contributed to strategic discussions led by the Gender and Development Network's Women's Leadership and Participation Working Group who worked successfully to get WPE added to DFID's strategic vision on gender equality" [3, 4]. As she continues, "This would not have been possible without Professor Walls' research contribution" [3].

4.2 Impact on elections and electoral processes in Somaliland

The research on Somaliland has strengthened political institutions and political inclusion by supporting analysis, understanding and transparency of representative electoral systems. It has developed strong connections with local partners and teams from international election observation missions, including from DFID, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the

EU's External Action Service. The then Governance Adviser at DFID, who now heads the UK Prosperity Fund in Somaliland, attests to how the work helped DFID understand the political economy of Somaliland. They describe [a] as their “go-to piece to understand the history [of Somaliland]” and that Walls’s advisory position has been important in understanding clan dynamics and that they would not have invested so much in voter registration infrastructure without this guidance. They also highlight that the “peaceful transfer of power in Somaliland, again, was testament to some of [Walls’] historical knowledge” [5].

Walls briefed 20 EU ambassadors and officials before and after the Somaliland elections in 2017, and briefed several successive UK representatives to Somaliland, as well as two successive UK Ambassadors to Somalia. The EU Ambassador to Somalia made clear the impact of this, stating that the: “activities, including... analyses, findings, press releases and reports, represented a valuable source of information for the EU Delegation and served for the preparation of political assessments, messaging and updates on the 2017 Somaliland pre- and post- electoral environment” [6].

4.3 Impact of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) on informal settlements

Much in the same way that DPU researchers recognised the need for local, culturally-specific research and data in Somaliland, they saw that action-oriented research in Sierra Leone would be key to tackling complex policy issues such as informal settlements. SLURC provides training and capacity-building for key urban stakeholders (such as local researchers and academics, civil servants, NGO staff and residents of informal settlements). The centre produced a MOOC to extend this training to 1,100 people internationally. The research centre has integrated informal settlements into how Freetown thinks about urban planning. It helped them become recognised in the National Land Policy of the country’s New National Development Plan, as well as the Mayor’s Freetown Transformation Plan (2018–2022) [7].

SLURC’s partnership with the Centre of Dialogue of Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA), enhanced CODOHSAPA’s capacity to engage in community-led research and improved the design of development interventions. As the Executive Director of the organisation stated, “the beauty or uniqueness of SLURC’s research approach is that it is quite community-led ...the research is owned by the community and so the findings are owned by community...The findings of this research has actually informed [the] community to make informed decisions about what actions they can do in terms of determining the political future of their respective communities. So I think in that dimension, SLURC has been very much influential” [8]. As the Executive Director of CODOHSAPA continued “SLURC is not just gathering figures, but is...translating them into useful... information that is user-friendly even for community people to use it to articulate their issues” [8]. This empowerment has encouraged the acknowledgement of CODOHSAPA and partner organisations including the Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) by governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Planning, as reliable sources of sound research data on informal settlements.

The Mayor of Freetown underlined the influence of SLURC’s community action plans on urban planning, improving informal settlements, and mitigating flooding, saying in a public speech that: “the community area action plans, which are a core part of SLURC’s work ... will be elevated into local area plans [within the Transform Freetown programme]. [Through them, SLURC provide] the empirical evidence we need as we work together to Transform Freetown” [9].

Impact on policy-making in Freetown has been evaluated independently. In a report from January 2019, *External Evaluation of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre*, the external and independent evaluator describes SLURC as having strategically positioned itself as a key mediator between communities, civil society groups and policymakers. The report states, ‘In just three years SLURC has emerged and developed into a leading urban stakeholder in Sierra Leone that is recognised for producing high quality, community driven research and analysis’ [10, p.iii]. It states, “SLURC is providing leadership on the implementation of key areas of the Transform Freetown agenda, has provided input into the drafting of the National

Land Policy and is well positioned to be consulted on a number of other policy developments, including the formulation of the National Development Plan” [10, p.iii]. This has been done through encouraging community-led policy, “More than just bringing them together to discuss key urban issues,” the report stated, “they [SLURC] are ensuring interactions are done in a way that they learn together, both through the formal training but also in one-to-one interactions” [10 p.8].

Finally, SLURC has had direct impact on those living in informal settlements, including an interviewed community member of the slum area, Cockle Bay. They benefited from the training and support – it had helped them campaign in community elections, ultimately winning the position of Community Youth Leader for Cockle Bay. As they stated, “Because of my involvement with SLURC...and all the empowerment...I’ve really broadened my knowledge”. This knowledge could then be used to empower the community to advocate for better design practices in national policy. As they continued, “I started disseminating this information, meeting youth groups, local clubs, organisations within the community...so many things I learned from them about the risks in within our community, the way we are exposed to risks, I think this is one of the things that really making government to see they want to impact on the community”. They recognise how the research had sensitised people to the benefits of political organisation, helping to provide the information needed for them to organise elections. As they stated, “Everybody is ready to receive SLURC... SLURC is [working with] the governments and other practitioners getting this information. And we believe one day, our dreams, what really we are yearning for, for Cockle Bay, it will come to pass. And that’s our belief, and that’s why we give 100% trust to SLURC.” [11].

Through co-production, collaboration and partnership, Bartlett researchers have contributed to equitable approaches to policymaking and governance, and built capacity for research-driven planning interventions that address poverty and unemployment in these regions.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Testimonial: Founder of NAGAAD [Video available on request]
2. Testimonial: Founder and director of Hargeisa Cultural Centre [Video available on request]
3. Testimonial: Senior Technical Specialist at Social Development Direct
4. SDD, 2017, *EARF (DFID) Policy Brief: Somali Women’s Political Participation and Leadership – Evidence and Opportunities* <https://bit.ly/2Qfgy15>
5. Testimonial: Former Governance Adviser at DFID, and now heading the UK Prosperity Fund activities in Somaliland [Video available on request]
6. Testimonial: EU Ambassador to Somalia
7. *Transform Freetown: An Overview 2019-2022* <https://bit.ly/2P5WG9M>
8. Testimonial: Executive Director of the Centre of Dialogue of Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA) [Video available on request]
9. Freetown Mayor speech to Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone Conference, Freetown <https://bit.ly/2OEW1MR>
10. *External Evaluation of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre* <https://bit.ly/3cGcM24>
11. Testimonial: Community member, Cockle Bay, Freetown [Video available on request]