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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Participatory Planning and Filmmaking for Urban Climate Resilience in Blantyre City, Malawi

John Aubrey Chirwa, *University of East Anglia*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study investigates the role of participatory video (PV) in urban planning for climate resilience and risk reduction in a peri-urban area of Blantyre City in Malawi. It examines how youth-led PV project facilitated exploration of urban climate resilience and resettlement as a transformative adaptation pathway for the community. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the entire film production process, encompassing planning, design, production, content creation, and dissemination. It also critically evaluates the participation dynamics and experiences of all stakeholders involved throughout the project.

The study was premised on the understanding that African cities are increasingly becoming urban and that they are plagued by a multidimensional of disasters due to various political and socio-economic factors such as high population growth, rapid urbanisation, pressure to develop marginal land and high levels of urban poverty. Yet institutional and governance structures in disaster risk reduction are poorly mainstreamed at city level, and urban climate resilience activities lack community participation to enhance legitimacy and ownership. In addition to that, the number and scale of disasters in urban settings are underestimated, and little attention is given to the role of urban governance. This makes it difficult to get disaster risk reduction action in urban settings because disaster impacts are perceived as “rural” by disaster and development specialists

The study uses various data collection tools such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation, threat ranking, questionnaires, workshops, storytelling and filming. Findings indicate that the PV process has the potential to enhance urban climate resilience and risk reduction in a peri-urban setting in Malawi. The process amplified participants’ voices about urban risk and vulnerabilities both within and beyond the community, raised awareness about disaster risk reduction, facilitated bottom-up risk information sharing and fostered dialogue, although the process was fraught with barriers due to the nature of participation as a double-edged sword. The challenges of participation manifested through donor logics, elite control, power dynamics, epistemic politics as well as its limited impact on policy change. These limitations of PV highlight a disconnect between epistemic legitimacy and decision-making authority, something that has implications for practitioners, policymakers and researchers in participatory video, participatory planning, disaster risk reduction and urban climate resilience.

The study therefore contributes to the body of knowledge on epistemic legitimacy, distributive and procedural justice and representational discourses within the context of disaster risk reduction and urban climate resilience. It recommends that practitioners, researchers and policymakers should critically and

ethically reflect on the process of participation and navigate the tensions that exist if outcomes to be truly transparent, democratic and legitimate.