

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone



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From the President, CSSL

Dear Readers,



Mr. Charlse Showers,
CSSL President

This year has been a remarkable one for CSSL with some good achievements and exiting moments.

We share the joy of celebrating our 34th anniversary, as the oldest environmental conservation organisation in Sierra Leone, founded by Dr. Sama Banya, a medical Doctor, to address the removal of the "Manes" from the Lion Mountains in the Western Area Peninsular Forest National Park.

This year has brought two new great projects for CSSL; the PAPFor and the BIOPAMA projects, which will both engage adjacent communities to Gola Rainforest National Park and Kambui Hills Forest Reserve. Getting these border communities to be partners in conservation is very essential and paramount to the preservation of the key biodiversity areas which are also biodiversity hotspots.

As we will be heading for the end-of-year holidays, I am wishing all a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2021. Please continue to support CSSL in our drive towards environmental protection... We will continue to keep you updated.

Happy reading!

We for nature, Nature for us.

CSSL Celebrates its 34th Anniversary



Group photo of participants during the celebrations at the Hill Valley Hotel in Freetown



Dr. Sama Banya being symbolically dressed by Prof. Dr. Foday Jaward in honor of his legacy

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) celebrated its 34th anniversary on September 25, 2020. To mark this important day, CSSL organised a press conference on September 24, 2020 at the organization's Conference Room in Freetown, where over ten media houses (electronic and print) were present. The objective was for the Society's leadership to convey a very important message to the nation, its partners and membership everywhere about its key achievements and challenges over the years, and plans for the years ahead through the media. The organization also organised a meeting for its members and local partners to not only celebrate its achievements, but also to celebrate the life of its founder, Dr. Sama Banya who coincidentally turned 90 at the time.

Addressing journalists during the press conference, the President of CSSL's Board of Trustees, Mr. Charles Showers said, CSSL was established 34 years ago by a group of well-meaning Sierra Leoneans, headed by Dr. Sama Banya, to promote the wise use and conservation of

Sierra Leone's natural resources so that wildlife and people benefit. He added that, in the beginning, there was only one national forest reserve/park Outtamba Kilimi National Park, but that CSSL could now boast of at least five National Parks under their watch. He added that, it has not been easy for the organization throughout the years because despite its successes, the CSSL is still facing several challenges which are hampering its effectiveness in getting things done for the good of society. He attributed some of the challenges to what he referred to as ineffectiveness by some government institutions in the implementation of national legal frameworks to ensure environmental protection in the country. He emphasised the high spate of encroachment currently happening into the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPFNP) "...the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park is the area which is facing the most challenges with human activities disrupting the ecosystems and in the process, affecting ecotourism and other aspects of human life", Mr. Showers lamented. He urged relevant authorities that are responsible for enforcing environmental laws to actually be seen to be doing their work with sincerity.

The Executive Director of CSSL, Dr. Sheku Kamara while

CSSL Celebrates its 34th Anniversary contd.

Text & photos by: Abdul K. Dumbuya/ CSSL

addressing journalists, commended the Government of Sierra Leone and the organization's international partners, Bird Life International, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in UK and Bread for the World (BfW) in Germany, for their continued support to CSSL over the years. He noted that, the importance of conserving the environment for future generations cannot be over-emphasized. According to him, CSSL has over the years done a lot of research into the country's biodiversity with the objective of identifying environment hotspots that are under threat of being lost due to human activities such as farming, hunting and illegal logging. He warned that unless the authorities support the work of CSSL in conserving the environment and ensuring that forest reserves and national parks are treated with the seriousness they deserve, future generations would not enjoy and benefit from biodiversity. He maintained that it is unfortunate that the work of the organization and its partners is not being supported by the relevant authorities as much as required. But hoped to see changes when CSSL gears up with its new strategies to manage and protect biodiversity for the good of all.

He mentioned that Sierra Leone has a lot of potential biodiversity and touristic sites such as Lake Sonfon which is said to be rich in various species and gold deposit. He added that CSSL had to intervene in order to save the lake from exploitation and degradation. He said, the organization has embarked on sensitizing communities around hotspot biodiversity areas with touristic potentials to encourage them move away from practices that destroy the environment. He said, there is abundant aquatic minerals to be harnessed which is sufficient and beneficial for generations to come.

The event at the Hill Valley Hotel in Freetown, where the anniversary celebrations were held, was chaired by Dr. Victor Massaquoi. Here, participants were

thrilled with a drama performance by the Freetong Players International, followed by statements delivered by various speakers, including Dr. Sama Banya, the Hon. Minister of Environment, Prof Dr. Foday Jaward, heads of other relevant government institutions, civil society representatives and the CSSL leadership, among others. Most speakers heaped a lot of praises and commendations on the revered founder of CSSL, Dr. Sama Banya for the lasting legacy (CSSL) he is leaving for generations in Sierra Leone. The celebrations were climaxed by presentation of gifts to Dr. Banya and related sessions.



The CSSL President, Mr. Charles Showers presenting a plaque to Dr. Sama Banya on behalf of CSSL



The CSSL Board of Trustees join Dr. Banya to symbolically cut the anniversary cake

The Coalition on Oil and Gas Pollution on the Environment Meets to Engage Communities on Early Warning Signs



Cross section of participants in one of the planning and coordination meetings in Freetown

Off-shore oil exploration activities are currently ongoing in Sierra Leone. This would be possibly followed by full scale oil production activities and therefore, expectations of high socio-economic boom are rife in all walks of life, particularly across the political spectrum. This is so because early this year (2020), the Government of Sierra Leone awarded licenses to two oil companies to undertake off-shore oil exploration activities in the country. It is however believed that the marine coastal environment and associated communities stand to be adversely affected by oil and gas activities.

Today, there is growing concern that the activities of some institutions and companies (e.g. factories, fishing companies, garages, oil dealers, etc.) dealing with oil products pose serious threats to the environment.

To mitigate the negative impacts of

oil pollution on the environment, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), received support from the MAVA Foundation through the Regional Programme for Conservation of the Coastal and Marine Zone (PRCM) to undertake a range of sensitization activities to increase key stakeholder engagement and public awareness about these issues.

In a bid to strengthen collaborations among key stakeholders in the sector, and increase public awareness on the hazards of oil and gas pollution, CSSL facilitated the formation of the Coalition on Oil and Gas Pollution on the Environment in Sierra Leone (COGaPE-SL) in 2019. Since June this year, the Society has so far facilitated the conduct of two planning and coordination meetings for the Coalition. Both meetings

were held on the 11th June and 30th September 2020 respectively at the CHASL Conference Room in Freetown, with participants drawn from the coalition membership comprising of key actors in the oil and gas sector in the country.

During the first meeting, discussions were centered on the details of the 2020 key project activities, the role of COGaPE-SL in the implementation process and next steps for the coalition. At the end of the discussions, COGaPE members committed themselves to support the project, as this forms an integral part of the mandate of the coalition. The representative from the Petroleum Directorate, Mr. Ahmed Bah said for the project to be successful, there should be more collaborative efforts among all relevant institutions. *“All must be ready to support in identifying possible areas of oil spill across the country. On behalf of my office, I would like to continue to register our strong commitment to ensuring the success of this project”*, Mr. Bah assured the gathering. He also promised to share with the group a map showing specific areas where the ongoing oil exploration exercise is being done to help in the discussion.

The Coalition on Oil and Gas Pollution on the Environment Meets to Engage Communities on Early Warning Signs contd.

Other participants including representatives from civil society organizations and government institutions like the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Petroleum Regulatory Agency (PRA) among others, also registered their institution's support to the project. Key issues discussed in the second meeting included the planned community engagement and sensitization activity in coastal communities and radio discussion programmes. The purpose was to get coalition members to voluntarily participate in the aforementioned activities. After several discussions, 4 participants volunteered to represent COGaPE in the outreach activities. They included representatives from the Petroleum Directorate, Office of National Security, Sierra Leone Fishers' Association, Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and PRA.



Alfred John Dee, Manager, EPA-SL making an input during the first planning & coordination meeting in Freetown

Text & photos by: Abdul K. Dumbuya/CSSL

Mapping Out Rest Stops for Migratory Birds

The more we understand migration of birds the better we can conserve them. Credit to: Paula Berzina

Each spring, billions of land birds -- Thrushes, Warblers, Orioles, Tanagers, and more -- migrate through the night, navigating the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Even greater numbers migrate in the fall. During the day, these birds stop to rest, recover and refuel for the next leg of their journey. These two phases of migration -- passage (flight) and stopover (rest) -- are well understood in ornithology but had previously only been studied independently.

Recently published research in the journal *Ecology Letters* combines these components into a new metric called the stopover-to-passage ratio. This study is the result of a collaboration between researchers at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Colorado State University, Georgetown University, University of Massachusetts and University of Delaware. "The stopover-to-passage ratio is an indicator of the number of migrants that stop to rest during migration and those that continue heading north or south, depending on the season. The ratio varies from site to site," said co-author Kyle Horton, assistant professor at Colorado State University and an alumnus of UD's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. "It's highly useful, from a conservation standpoint, to know if the majority of birds fly over a site or predominantly stop at a site to refuel or rest. The answer to this question can have important implications for what action is ultimately done on-the-ground to help migratory birds." "Characterization of stopover habitat use relative to passage represents a fundamental gap in our knowledge," said Emily Cohen, lead author and assistant professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Appalachian Laboratory. "This gap primarily exists because a methodology to collect broad-scale information about distributions of birds in terrestrial habitats during the day and in the airspace at night has only recently become possible with weather surveillance radar."

Archived since the mid-1990s but only freely available since 2004, weather radar data collected by NOAA, the National

Mapping Out Rest Stops for Migratory Birds contd.

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, now enables researchers to map the nocturnal habits of migratory bird populations. It is a herculean effort to process and synthesize these vast data sets; scientists must distinguish bird movement from precipitation data on the radar based on density, speed and knowledge of the natural history of bird behavior. Calculating both the traffic patterns of the birds in flight and their activity in stopover sites, the research team created migration maps and calculated the stopover-to-passage ratio along the entire U.S. Gulf Coast. "Our findings were not what we expected," said Jeff Buler, University of Delaware associate professor of wildlife ecology and senior author on the paper. "We understand the phenology of migration quite well, so we know the absolute number of birds moving through an area at the peak of migration. The density of birds on the ground also peaks around the same time. When looking at stopover-to-passage ratio, we thought that we would see more birds stopping during the peak of migration but we actually found the opposite."

Even though fewer birds migrate outside of the peak window, a larger percentage of that bird population stops at particular resting and foraging sites, indicating that those lands are of critical importance at that time. "We saw a high stopover-to-passage ratio in the panhandle of Florida, which was unexpected because in the spring there aren't as many birds moving through that area," said Buler. "What that tells us is that the birds that are moving through that area need to stop, and it actually is indirect evidence that these are likely migrants that are coming from South America. They're flying over the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean, so they're making a farther journey than those that are just crossing the Gulf of Mexico. That first place to land in Florida is really important to them and most of them have to stop because they've run out of gas. From a conservation perspective, this really opens up a question of whether we need to rethink how we prioritize conserving stopover areas." Currently, breeding ground habitat receives far more conservation attention and protection than migratory stopover habitat. However, with migratory bird populations facing rapid declines due to many interacting factors including light pollution, climate change, and habitat loss



and degradation, researchers hope that the stopover-to-passage ratio can offer additional insight and renewed interest in often overlooked stopover sites. "These results show the critical importance of the habitats around the U.S. coast of the Gulf of Mexico and Florida. In Kondembaia, the chiefdom's headquarter town, Paramount Chief Sheku Magba Koroma III thanked CSSL for what he referred to as "a great gesture" provided to his chiefdom by the organization. He promised to ensure that his people utilize the materials provided in order to maintain their safety from the pandemic. He also said he would continue to give his full support towards the protection of Lake Sonfon for the benefit of the nation. Other speakers like Pa Sandy Turay, who represented the land owners of the lake also thanked CSSL for the gesture noting that, the Society was the first NGO to provide such materials to them in the chiefdom for which they were grateful.

CSSL still awaits receipt of funds approval from the EU and USAID in order to continue providing the much needed COVID-19 prevention support to forest edge communities in the greater Gola landscape in the south and east of Sierra Leone. for sustaining North America's migratory birds. We show for the first time that over half of the birds migrating through these coastlines stop there," said Cohen. "Further, disparities in disproportionate selection and absolute abundance at stopover sites revealed potential migratory bottlenecks where geography or restricted habitat may disproportionately concentrate birds along migration routes, highlighting that density of use alone is not a comprehensive measure of the conservation value of a stopover site for migrating birds, a topic that has not been addressed during migration. The areas where the stopover-to-passage ratio is high are potentially more important for migrating birds than was previously thought."

"Linking aerial and terrestrial habitats with this new metric provides a unique opportunity to understand how migrating birds, in this case very large numbers of them, use a region where we know drastic and rapid changes are occurring," said co-author Andrew Farnsworth of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Whether for prioritization of critical areas or for developing dynamic conservation planning, this kind of quantitative science is invaluable for supporting decision-making that can safeguard this incredible region and the spectacular movements of birds that occur here annually."

Story Source:
Materials provided by University of Delaware. Original written by Lauren Bradford.

CSSL Board of Trustees Visit Western Area Peninsular National Park



The CSSL Board of Trustees during their visit at the Bambo Waterfall in the Western Area Peninsular National Park

*Text & photo by:
Mr. Charles Showers / CSSL President*

On August 28th and 29th 2020, the Board of Trustees of Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), visited the Western Area Peninsular National Park as part of their annual visit to CSSL operational areas.

Mambo waterfalls was the first location visited. This is the largest waterfall in the park and needs protection as the area close to it has been encroached upon by farmers cultivating cassava.

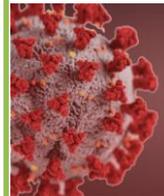
However, the beautiful waterfall flows with such elegance that, it shows the need to protect such a unique rainforest.

The catchment forest at river no 2 was also visited. Tremendous encroachment was noticed and this shows the need to further engage the government to protect the boundaries of the Western Area Peninsular Forest as Freetown and its environs depend on this forest for potable water.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone has been involved through research over the years in transforming the Western Area Peninsular Forest Reserve into a National Park in 2012.

CSSL will continue to engage The Government of Sierra Leone and its partners to ensure that the Western Area Peninsular National Park remains a National Park.

CSSL Reduces COVID-19 Socio-economic Shocks in Greater Gola Communities in Sierra Leone



Following the announcement of the index case of the COVID-19 in Sierra Leone on the 31st March, 2020 by President Julius Maada Bio, several stringent measures were (until recently) instituted to stop or mitigate the spread. Such measures include among others, shutting down the country's international borders with neighbouring countries, full national lockdowns, a partial national lockdown restricting inter-district movement for a period of two weeks, banning the observance of all forms of congregational prayers in religious houses among other measures, all in a bid to further implement the State of Public Health Emergency that was earlier declared before the index case was registered. In spite of all these measures however, the country continues to register new cases almost on a daily basis amounting now to over seventy fatalities and over two thousand confirmed cases in the entire country.

Cognizant of the high consideration that the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and its partners place on the health of communities in and around the Gola Landscape and beyond; and to avoid delays in project implementation due to potential escalation of COVID-19, CSSL and GRC-LG obtained approval to use part of the funds from the WA BiCC and PAPFor projects funded by USAID and EU respectively to support vulnerable Gola forest-edge communities. CSSL undertook the implementation of support activities in 5



A representative of the DiCOVERC in Kenema explaining the COVID-19 prevention messages to community members before distribution of items in Kambuwabu

project chiefdoms in Kenema and Pujehun districts to complement government's efforts to strengthen knowledge and provide logistical support in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among staff and forest edge communities in the greater Gola Landscape in Sierra Leone.

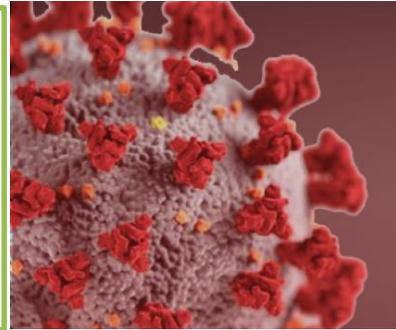
Prior to implementation, CSSL undertook preparatory work that included logistical arrangements and initiating collaboration with other project partners operating in the targeted activity districts. The outcomes of such preliminary activities paved the way to kick-start the implementation of the activity.

The field implementation, which

spanned from 19th – 26th July 2020, started at Kambuwabu community, Nongowa chiefdom, which occupies both the northern and southern parts of the Kambui Hills Forest Reserves (KHFR) in Kenema district. Residents from two other forest edge communities (Pujehun and Deima) converged in this community to receive their materials and also listen to the integrated COVID-19 prevention and forest conservation messages.

In a bid to minimize the risks of getting some of the materials destroyed by the rains, and spending more time than planned in the implementation due to long distances between chiefdoms, the team decided to safely stockpile the materials at strategic points in each of the remaining chiefdoms under the

CSSL Reduces COVID-19 Socio-economic Shocks in Greater Gola Communities in Sierra Leone contd.



protective custody of chiefdom authorities. The team jointly scheduled time with local leaders for the distribution and sensitization sessions. This was to ensure that local authorities mobilised nearby forest-edge communities to avail themselves and receive the materials and key messages.

The distribution and sensitization sessions were done in open spaces, community centers and Paramount Chiefs' (PCs') compounds with strict adherence to the COVID-19 prevention regulations prescribed for public gatherings. Materials distributed included food items (bags of rice, onions, salt, jugs of vegetable oil and packets of maggi), COVID-19 prevention materials (facemasks, liquid soap, veronica buckets, thermometers), information, education and communication materials (posters and stickers) and rechargeable megaphones (with batteries) to enable communities mobilise themselves to take appropriate health or environmental protection and conservation actions.

The distribution and sensitization team constituted designated CSSL staff from the organization's Headquarters in Freetown and its Kenema District Office, and GRC LG field staff in charge of Koya and Barri chiefdoms that were mainly covered by the WA BiCC project funding for this activity. In every chiefdom visited, the team ensured that PCs or their representatives and chiefdom health officials took lead roles in the distribution and sensitization drive, while key team officials provided backup where required. Reinforcing the integrated COVID-19 prevention and conservation messages in all

sessions, the CSSL Communications Officer, Abdul K. Dumbuya who led the team, encouraged communities to follow all prescribed preventive measures against the scourge. He added that, CSSL always cares for the health and welfare of communities particularly during such difficult times, which was the reason for getting their donors, USAID and EU to support them. Mr. Dumbuya also emphasized how they (communities) were an integral part of the organization in its quest to protect and conserve Sierra Leone's natural habitats. Other team members who included Madam Mariama Kargbo, CSSL's Environmental Education (EE) Officer and Aruna Koroma, CSSL's Asst. Project Manager for the Jensen funded project also took communities through the correct hand-washing steps and use of facemasks. They reiterated that, CSSL prioritizes its project communities and were there to complement government's efforts in protecting forest resources and the environment generally. They implored all to use particularly the COVID-19 materials provided for their intended purpose.

Communities were overwhelmed with happiness for what most referred to as the first gesture ever to have been provided to them by any institution. The women's leader at Kambuabu in Nongowa chiefdom, said, "... on behalf of my chiefdom and my community, I want to thank CSSL for thinking about us the poor and deprived in a crisis period like this. These items would not have come at any other better time than this. CSSL is the first NGO Mariama Jaward of Niawa chiefdom

thanked CSSL and the donors *to provide us with such support, for which we are very grateful!*" Furthermore, PC Mariama Jaward of Niawa chiefdom thanked CSSL and the donors for what she described as timely intervention at a time like this. PC Jaward continued that, "... currently, we know how our communities are finding it difficult to get their daily sustenance; no amount of support is too small in this trying times of the world, especially in our communities. The COVID-19 support CSSL and its donors have provided to forest edge communities is enough to spur us more to embrace the work of CSSL in our communities with full participation to keep our forest intact." Several other key stakeholders also expressed similar sentiments in appreciation of the support provided by WA BiCC and PAPFor projects through CSSL.

CSSL also provided facemasks to all its 26 staff based in the headquarters and district offices. This was to augment the support being provided to them from other sources in order to ensure their safety from contracting the virus.



Niawa chiefdom representatives at the PC's compound after receiving the support items

Text by: Abdul K. Dumbuya / CSSL
Photos by: PC Mariama Jaward & Abdul K. Dumbuya / CSSL



Thanks to our partners for all their support!

- BirdLife International
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Bread for the World
- PRCM
- IUCN
- EU
- Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone
- Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry
- Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary
- Wetlands International
- Ministry of Lands...
- Ministry of Environment
- Family Kingdom, Freetown, Sierra Leone
- Hotel Africanus, Freetown, Sierra Leone
- MAVA Foundation



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