

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone



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From the Executive Director, CSSL

Dear Readers,



Dr. Sheku Kamara
Executive Director, CSSL

The environmental challenges are growing, and CSSL is expanding on its scope of work. As we do, we keep our members, partners, supporters and the wider readership informed of our unrelenting strides to make a difference.

We report here our proactive engagements on imminent environmental issues relating to the use and disposal of oil and gas and also how we continuously strive to develop and protect the Western Area Peninsula National Park. A park that is under constant attack from all fronts, and it's now classified by BirdLife International as an Important Bird Area in Danger (IBAiD). We are making tremendous progress at the Gola Rainforest National Park and we share some of our recent endeavours that are making a difference to communities in Malema chiefdom. As we engage forest-edge and forest-dependent communities and policy makers, we also put emphasis on the engagement of our future generation of leaders through School Nature Clubs (SNCs). CSSL and its counterparts in Sierra Leone and Liberia seek to improve on their approaches by reviewing existing Environmental Education (EE) Guides for SNC Teachers.

These and other stories would certainly make an interesting and passionate read for all. We hope that you will get inspired to do your bit to save mother nature – if we are for nature, nature will always be for us.

Happy reading!

We for nature, Nature for us.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone Holds Project Inception Meetings with Stakeholders in the Greater Gola Landscape in Sierra Leone.



Head of GRC LG, Francis Massaquoi, addressing key stakeholders at the Zimmi Community Barray in Makpele chiefdom, Pujehun district.

The greater Gola and its satellite community forest landscape, including the Kambui Hills Forest Reserve (KHFR), continues to suffer unprecedented anthropogenic activities that have resulted into greater negative impacts on the lives and livelihood of surrounding communities and the country generally. Such activities, if left unchecked and uncontrolled, will further degenerate the landscape and subsequently result into serious environmental consequences.

In order to sustainably support communities and the Government of Sierra Leone to address the aforementioned problems, the European Union, through BirdLife International, provided funding support to the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and Gola Rainforest Conservation Limited by Guarantee

(GRC LG) to undertake various community forestry management interventions across the greater Gola Landscape for three (3) years. The project dubbed as PAPFor, which started in July 2020, is intended to build on gains left behind by the USAID funded West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) project that ended in June 2020.

In a bid to officially commence the implementation of the project, CSSL and GRC LG jointly conducted series of project inception meetings with key stakeholders across the ten greater Gola forest chiefdoms in Pujehun, Kailahun and Kenema districts from the 9th – 20th November, 2020. The engagements attracted over 600 key stakeholders and other community members in

each of the venues. Participants included Paramount Chiefs (PCs), section and town chiefs, women and youth leaders among others. The objective was to introduce the project to stakeholders, while also seeking their support to ensure the achievement of the set project objectives. During the meetings, participants deliberated lengthily on key issues that would support the development of tangible action plans relating to key project deliverables for both Kambui and Gola landscapes.

Addressing stakeholders in every engagement, the PAPFor Project Coordinator, Emurana K. Sowa said, the aim of the project was to protect and conserve the greater Gola landscape which include the KHFR. He said, GRC LG has been taking the lead in conserving the Gola landscape, and has been doing so in close collaboration with CSSL.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone Holds Project Inception Meetings with Stakeholders in the Greater Gola Landscape in Sierra Leone contd.

Text: Alice Kofie-Asare/CSSL & Abdul K. Dumbuya/CSSL
Photos: Alice Kofie-Asare/CSSL

He added that, a lot of projects have come and gone, and PAPFor project being the most recent was meant to complement the former WA BiCC project. Mr. Sowa gave a rundown of all project related activity plans including areas of operations, the lifespan of the project and targeted communities that the project hopes to cover. *"I want to call on everyone present here today, to accord this project the support it deserves so that together, we can make benchmarks that can be enviable for other partners to emulate"*, Mr. Sowa appealed. He pledged commitment, on behalf of his team, to include the stakeholders in the implementation process, as according him, the success of the project strongly depends on collaboration between the community stakeholders and the implementing institutions.

The Head of GRC LG, Francis Massaquoi, gave an overview of his institution's operations in the project area, including conservation activities completed and achievements made over their last 28 years' partnership work with CSSL. Mr. Massaquoi reaffirmed the tremendous achievements made by the WA BiCC project, which the PAPFor project is expected to capitalise on for its own success. He added that, most of the work that the project is set to do in the next three years were envisioned by the WA BiCC project which is expected to yield positive impact during the implementation of the PAPFor project. The Head of GRC called on local authorities and relevant community stakeholders to give the required support to GRC LG and CSSL for a successful implementation of the project activities across the landscape.

On behalf of the Gola PCs, the Paramount Chief of Tunkia chiefdom, PC Amara Goway Sama welcomed the PAPFor project, stating that the seven chiefdoms have been working with GRC-LG over the past years and that, projects have come and gone, but their relationship with GRC-LG has always been cordial because both parties always stick to their end of the bargain. On behalf of his colleagues and their people, he pledged that they were ready and willing to cooperate fully with the PAPFor project and would continue to give the support that is required of them for the project to succeed.

"I encourage CSSL to include us the community people in the implementation of the project as we are directly affected, and so should be the direct beneficiaries. That is the only way you can get our people to cooperate with the implementation process", PC Sama emphasised. He thanked GRC-LG and CSSL for having the people at heart, as the people of the forest edge communities are the direct sufferers of the effects of human and wildlife conflict. The PC reiterated that, this sometimes proves very difficult for them (chiefs) to solve, but added that, if the people were getting benefits from conservation, they would tend to ignore the animals that destroy their plantations. He also encouraged the community people to be patient with the project implementers as they (chiefs) would continue to engage the project heads to ensure that the people's entitlements are delivered to them.



Emurana Sowa, PAPFor Project Coordinator taking participants through the project concept at the Blama Community Barry in Small Bo chiefdom, Kenema district



Participants during the engagement @ the Blama Community Barry in Small Bo chiefdom, Kenema district

Gola Landscape Actors Harmonize Environmental Education Guide for School Nature Clubs.



Participants in a group work session during the review process at the Paloma Conference Centre in Kenema

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) organised a two-day trans-boundary workshop at the Paloma Multi-purpose Hall in Kenema to review existing Environmental Education (EE) Guides for School Nature Club Teachers. The activity which was held on 7th and 8th December, 2020 was supported by the EU funded PAPFor Trans-boundary project, and had in attendance participants from the three implementing partners including the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL), Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee (GRCLG) and CSSL. The key objective was to facilitate increased contemporary environmental literacy among trans-boundary populations in the Gola landscape through review and harmonization of existing EE guides.

The activity was preceded by statements from various speakers including the Head of Gola, Francis Massaquoi, the PAPFor Project Coordinators in Liberia and Sierra Leone, James Mulbah and Emurana Sowa respectively, among others. Mr. Massaquoi expressed delight over the initiative of bringing together all three partners to discuss

such critical documents which support the lifeline of Gola Forest. He thanked SCNL officials for making it to the workshop, adding that, working together in the conservation industry with SCNL has been “very enjoyable” over the years as both parties are passionate about protecting the Gola forest, a heritage he said, both organizations shared on either side of the boundary.

The PAPFor Project Coordinator at SCNL, James Mulbah, expressed thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Liberian team for the warm hospitality accorded them since they arrived in Sierra Leone. He assured all present that the workshop would be fruitful and that, the intended harmonized EE guide for School Nature Clubs would certainly stand the test of time. Mr. Mulbah asserted that, for people to come together to figure out solutions to a common problem affecting them was a step in the right direction.

Emurana Kemoh Sowa, the PAPFor Project Coordinator at CSSL said, PAPFor project is a trans-boundary initiative with the potential to providing opportunities to partners from both countries to interact and foster relationships relative to

Gola Landscape Actors Harmonize Environmental Education Guide for School Nature Clubs contd.



trans-boundary forest conservation and environmental protection. Mr. Sowa called on all present to utilize the two days' period in the most possible way to ensure the production of a document that will serve its intended purpose.

Partners (SCNL and GRCLG/CSSL) were made to present their respective EE guides by Fomba M. Kanneh, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator – GRCLG and Victor M. Fabbah, PAPFor Project's EE Coordinator – CSSL, who moderated the workshop. This was followed by plenary discussions focusing mainly on differences in contents, and how both documents could be merged to produce a single guide. The key session to harmonize both guides was undertaken in group work. Participants were divided into two groups, and tasked to look at the contents. After several deliberations, presentations were made on the final day with distinct differences figured out, and key suggestions proffered to enhance effective performance.

The activity was climaxed by a field trip to Lalehun, where the Gola Rainforest National Park has one of its eco-lodges and resource centres and Tiwai Wildlife Sanctuary at Tiwai Island. This was meant to introduce participants to some of Sierra Leone's finest forest conservation sites.

*Text: Alice Kofie-Asare / CSSL
Photos: CSSL / GRCLG*

Spring Alive Supports Bird Watching for School Nature Clubs in Western Area.



HEIDELBERGCEMENT



*Photos by Abdul K. Dumbuya / CSSL
Activity conducted at the Tokeh beach, Western Area Rural district, outside Freetown*

Darwin Initiative Supports Gola Forest Conservation Interventions in Malema Chiefdom, Kailahun District.



The Gola Rainforest and its community forests consist of high conservation value and rich diversity of living species, which represent one of the biodiversity hot spots on earth. It provides not just a magnificent spectacle and a sanctuary for an incredible array of plants and wildlife but also shelter for species of plants and animals.

Increase in human population in recent years has led to increased pressure on forests by local communities for livelihoods and shelter. This has resulted to deforestation and environmental degradation and thereby contributing to depletion of natural resources.

It was against this backdrop that the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), in collaboration with Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee (GRC LG) received funding support from the Darwin Initiative, to implement a project dubbed; "Linking Food Security and Biodiversity Conservation under the REDD+". As part of the REDD+ protects, it is aimed at protecting the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) by helping forest-edge people sustainably increase crop yield and keeping annual deforestation of their community forests (CF) <2.5%. A core component of this project is the conduct of a community engagement and sensitization campaign through road shows, targeting 14 forest edge communities within the Gola landscape in Malema chiefdom, Kailahun district. The objective of the campaign was to bring the targeted communities up to speed with the realities of the project and also ensure their commitment to support forest management.



CSSL's EE Officer, Mariama Kargbo, explaining the key messages through flashcards

The sensitization activities were conducted in four points of the Darwin project communities from the 1st to 5th December, 2020. Each of the points is made up of a cluster of communities based on proximity, and include Mogbaima, Makpoima, Congo and Gollie respectively.

The sessions started with brief explanation on the background and purpose of the project. The team emphasized that it was a way to help reduce food insecurity while also protecting both their community forests and the protected area. Critical ways tipped to achieve that is through livelihood support and effective collaboration between partners and the 14 targeted communities. Communities were encouraged to provide active participation and involvement in the project work to enable project officials identify their needs or challenges.

The Land-use Planning and Co-management Officer, Christian Lansana

said, there has been important issues going on with resource use and the Protected Area such as pressure from outsiders like logging, mining, etc. on community people and their forest. Therefore, he said the Darwin Initiative supported project aims at working with the community people to sustainably manage their resources and to provide livelihood so as to avoid over exploitation and encroachment into the Protected Area. Mr. Lansana continued that, in order to maintain the gains of the project, there is a need for the formation of Resource Mobilization Committees. "...members must have good knowledge of the project to enable them make meaningful contributions to the operations of the committee on available resources, and how they should be utilized to avoid resource use conflict", he emphasised.



Darwin Initiative Supports Gola Forest Conservation Interventions in Malema Chiefdom, Kailahun District contd.



School Nature Club pupils dramatizing conservation messages @ Magboima

both the community forest and the Protected Area. She provided details illustrating through visual aids (flashcards) additional benefits that community people could derive from conserving the forest such as the air we breathe, watershed protection, prevention of soil erosion and mitigation of climate change effects.

School Nature Club (SNC) pupils also made meaningful contributions in educating the community people about the relevance of forest conservation through drama. Their involvement thrilled all and encouraged their parents' participation in the roadshows the more. They were mobilized beforehand, and given key messages about wildlife conservation and the need for community forestry. The pupils took turns to give key messages to their community folks about the relevance of forest protection and also asked questions; they also respond to questions asked by the roadshow team.

In her presentation in all the points, Mariama Kargbo, CSSL's Environmental Education (EE) Officer, stated the four components of the project and how they operate generally; the relevance of forest conservation and a means to engage in forest-based livelihood support without degrading or over-exploiting

*Text: Bobson Kobba/CSSL & Abdul K. Dumbuya/CSSL
Photos: Abdul K. Dumbuya/CSSL*

BftW Supports Sustainable Management of the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park through a Roadshow Campaign in surrounding Communities.



CSSL's Communications Officer, Abdul K. Dumbuya, in engagement with participants @ the Big Water Community.

Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPFNP) is one of Sierra Leone's most important Protected Areas (PAs), because of its location to the capital city, as a water catchment area that supports the entire population in Freetown with potable water. The Park provides ecosystem services that benefit inhabitants in Freetown and communities in the peninsular.

However, inhabitants in most communities, especially Big Water, situated around the Park have embarked on land grabbing, neglecting the benefits provided by this ecosystem. Sometimes this happens because of knowledge gap on the environmental consequences resulting from their actions. Hence, organizing a massive sensitization program in this area to break this knowledge gap on environmental issues is a good move in maintaining peace among communities and the Freetown municipality generally.

BftW Supports Sustainable Management of the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park through a Roadshow Campaign in surrounding Communities contd.

With funds from Bread for the World (BftW) through the Civil Peace Service program in Sierra Leone, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) organised a road show campaign on the 15th November, 2020 to increase knowledge among immediate communities around the WAPFNP about the relevance of protecting the Park and the associated consequences relative to community peace and development. The key messages delivered included preservation of water sources, sustainable use of ecosystem services, and maintaining peace among others.

The roadshow was moderated by the CSSL/BftW Project Manager, Mr. Papanie Bai-Sesay. Having gone through all the opening courtesies, Mr. Sesay gave a brief background of the activity. The CSSL Communications Officer, Mr. Abdul K. Dumbuya briefly talked about CSSL. He said, the Society is a membership based organization that has its members across Sierra Leone and outside the country. He noted that, CSSL is the oldest environmental NGO in Sierra Leone, and has been working hard in the past thirty years with the Government, communities and partners to promote the wise use of the country's environmental resources.

He emphasized that the Society works also with school nature clubs in various schools across the country, adding that, the involvement of school kids in its sensitization programs, is to use them as ambassadors for nature so that they grow up with such knowledge which they can use to remind their relations and peers on the dangers of deforestation.

Mr. Dumbuya furthered that, their primary focus for that roadshow was to support communities in promoting peace through knowledge transfer. "...if you have sustainable peace in your communities, you will surely have the drive to come together to ensure the protection of the National Park...", he maintained. He also explained to participants about the differences between a national park and a community forest, citing examples of national parks like the Gola Rainforest National Park, Western Area Peninsula National Park, etc.

Mr. Papanie Bai-Sesay asked participants whether they knew any country that does not have a PA, and to name any district in Sierra Leone without a PA also. These areas are gazetted as PAs because they are areas of high conservation value; and mostly, such areas are not good for housing



Papanie Bai-Sesay, BftW Project Manager, leading the question-answer session during the engagement @ the Big Water Community.

because once cleared, they become highly prone to many environmental disasters, Mr. Sesay asserted.

He explained to participants about ecosystem services benefits and other key reasons why communities need to protect the forest. "Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human well-being (TEEB D0). They support directly or indirectly our survival and quality of life", Mr. Sesay noted. He further explained that, according to IUCN, a PA is a 'clearly' defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Before the activity ended, participants expressed marked appreciation to CSSL and the donors for what they described as insightful session. According to the Big Water Headman, Manso Sesay, he said the roadshow actually did highlight most of their bad practices in and around the National Park. On behalf of his community, he registered strong commitment towards ensuring that the messages reach the rest of his community members and surrounding communities.

Text & Photos: Abdul K. Dumbuya/CSSL & Papanie Bai-Sesay/CSSL

COGaPE – SL Leads Efforts to Reduce the Effects of Oil and Gas Pollution on Marine Environment in Sierra Leone.



Woodie Bakie Koroma, PRO, Consortium of National Fishers Associations and Member of COGaPE -SL addressing community people at Solima in Sorogbema chiefdom, Pujehun district.

As Sierra Leone continues to prepare for possible oil production activities, expectations of high socio-economic boom are rife in all walks of life, particularly across the political spectrum. 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.

On October 15, 2020, the Coalition on Oil and Gas Pollution on the Environment in Sierra Leone (COGaPE-SL) embarked on a site visit to identify specific areas where oil pollution was suspected to be taking place in and around Freetown. The coalition was formed by CSSL in 2019, and constitutes relevant government institutions, oil dealing companies and environmental civil society organizations. The one day long

on-the-spot visit targeted the national Electricity Generation and Transmission Company (EGTC), Shalimar Tricycle Company, Sierra Fishing Company and a community-based oil recycling installation in Thurpojor community in the outskirts of Freetown. The aforementioned companies, factories and garages are among numerous end-users of oil products in their operations.

General observations made by the team in most of the institutions suggested indiscriminate spillage of used oil which sometimes empties into nearby streams. These observations were however denied when brought forth to the designated personnel. They informed the team that, they do not dispose of waste/used oil directly; instead, they supply it to timber industries to fuel their power-saw machines and also to manufacturers of blocks who use it as a casting lubricant.

The team also discovered illegal diesel production at Thurpojor community in the Western Area Rural District Council (WARDC), outside Freetown. The community people, who were suspected of benefiting from the illegal practice, were not ready to cooperate with the visiting team. However, the team followed traces of oil spills that eventually led them to the hideout in the woods close to a river, where several reservoirs of burned oil and a distillation facility were discovered.

On the 10th November 2020, CSSL and COGaPE set out to conduct community engagement and sensitization activities in 5 coastal communities in Pujehun district, south of Sierra Leone. The five-day event aimed at providing key information

COGaPE – SL Leads Efforts to Reduce the Effects of Oil and Gas Pollution on Marine Environment in Sierra Leone contd.

of oil and gas industries in and around their communities and on the wetlands, and how such activities if not well regulated, have the potential to destroy marine life and the environment generally. The communities covered included Solima, Liya, and in Sorogbema chiefdom, and Gbondapi and Blamapuila in and Kpanga Kabonde chiefdom.

Before the engagements in communities, the sensitization team paid a courtesy call to the Pujehun District Council to officially inform them about the activity and solicit their support. The district's Chief Administrator, Mr. Sahr Emmanuel Yambasu and the Environmental and Social Officer (ESO), Mr. Timothy A. Kamara, welcomed the team and helped in identifying the strategic communities to target in the campaign. Mr. Yambasu noted that, the activity was a welcome news to all in the district, adding that he only hoped the relevant government authorities would treat the security attached to oil and gas issues with the desired seriousness. He emphasized that, "... often times, government officials only place premium on the high economic boom that comes with oil business, disregarding the security and community development of the affected areas". He requested the district SEO to support the team with all relevant information required to ensure a successful campaign.

In the communities, huge crowds turned out to witness the sessions. Prominent among the messages covered was early warning signs. The team clearly explained to communities the various indicators or signs denoting oil spills on marine environment. They used video documentaries, jingles, posters and stickers with key messages to support in the sensitization drive. During the sessions, participants applauded the efforts of CSSL, COGaPE and donor partners for what they described as laudable initiative.



A member of the Sierra Leone Navy glancing through the IEC materials during the engagement @ Solima community.



CSSL's EE Officer, Mariama Kargbo, distributing communication materials to participants at Gbondapi community.

Text & Photos: 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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