



Conservation Society of Sierra Leone



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From the Executive Director, CSSL



*Dr. Sheku Kamara (PhD)
Executive Director – CSSL*

As world efforts grow to tackle the rather increasing environmental challenges, CSSL continues to strengthen its engagements with partners, key stakeholders and communities to figure out workable strategies to attempt to address these issues.

In this edition, we are delighted to update our members, partners, supporters and the wider readership on our interventions at our operational areas across the country. These include environmental and conservation issues relating to efforts being employed to mitigate hazards of oil and gas pollution on marine life; our continuous strides to develop and protect our national parks and reserves including the Western Area Peninsula National Park, Gola Rainforest National Park and Kambui Hills Forest Reserve. We are also making remarkable progress in involving young people and school children in conservation work, thanks to our donor partners who are always there to support us through and through.

We are hopeful that these and other stories contained herein would make an interesting and passionate read for all. It is also our hope that you will be inspired by these stories to join us and other partners in the drive to save our environment for the common good. Membership to CSSL is open to the general public.

Happy reading!

We for Nature, Nature for us.

PAPFor Project Engages Key Stakeholders in the Greater Gola Landscape.



The PAPFor project is funded by the European Union, and is jointly implemented by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and Gola Rainforest Company – Limited by Guarantee (GRC-LG). It is a community forestry initiative that took over from the USAID funded West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change project in 2020 to continue strengthening the conservation of the Gola Landscape and Kambui Hills Forest Reserves in Sierra Leone.

Since the inception of the project, CSSL has put premium on community and key stakeholder engagements as one of its strategic approaches through which the project team solicits the required support and cooperation from communities for successful implementation of planned activities.

The project conducted series of community engagement meetings from 25th – 30th August 2021 in various locations to update key stakeholders and communities on the status of the project's achievements, challenges and modifications during implementation.

The meetings were staged in 3 chiefdom headquarter towns (Zimmi, Blama and Joru towns respectively) where representatives from other chiefdoms converged.

The first meeting was held at the Zimmi Community Barray in Makpele chiefdom, Pujehun district. Here, representatives from Barri and Tunkia chiefdoms in Pujehun and Kenema districts respectively joined in to receive updates and make appropriate contributions. The Paramount Chief (PC) of Makpele chiefdom, PC Saffa Tamu welcomed his colleague PCs, their subjects and the CSSL team. PC Tamu said, he was extremely impressed with CSSL for regarding community ownership as a key aspect of the success of the PAPFor project, which was why they decided to return to communities to inform them about work so far accomplished by the project. He therefore called on all present

to be attentive as he believed that people in the forest edge communities had been an integral part of the implementation of the project and so, should also contribute in making corrections where necessary such that the remaining activities could be successful and beneficial to all.

The paramount chief of Tunkia chiefdom, PC Amara Goway Sama expressed hopes that the Golawoma and Bunumbu communities would not be neglected because of their geographical location. He added that, it is not their fault to have found themselves in the forest; so let them be considered as that would encourage them to feel part of the implementation process, regardless of the distance. "The two communities have no vehicular roads, no access to mobile phone network connections, no schools and health facilities; but our people are used to all the hardship because their settlement is within the National Park", PC Sama lamented.

The second engagement meeting was hosted at the Saint Joseph's School Examination Hall in Blama town, Small Bo chiefdom in Kenema district.

PAPFor Project Engages Key Stakeholders in the Greater Gola Landscape. Cont.

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

In attendance, were key stakeholders from various communities in Niawa and Nongowa chiefdoms. PC Dafie Banya of the host chiefdom welcomed all present and thanked CSSL and the donors for making efforts to work with communities for the protection of Kambui Hills Forest Reserve (KHFR). He encouraged communities and relevant government institutions to work with the project for the sustainable protection of the Reserve.

The Paramount Chief of Niawa chiefdom in Kenema district, PC Madam Mariama Jaward described the event as very important because they as PCs are not always present in most of the community forestry activities; but organising such platforms to update them on the progress of the project was very remarkable.

The final meeting was held at the Joru Community Centre in Gaura chiefdom, Kenema district. Addressing the gathering, the Paramount Chief of Gaura chiefdom, PC Sama Bunduka said, the importance of their community forest was first felt by their ancestors who prohibited communities to farm within or cut down the forest. He said since then, their forest has been a canopy that has been protecting communities from rain storms and even water shortages. He added that, the Gaura community and its neighbours have always committed themselves to protecting the Gayayie from people he described as “unscrupulous invaders”. Similar sentiments were also expressed by the PCs of Nomo and Koya chiefdoms.

In all of the engagements, the PAPFor National Project Coordinator, Emurana Sowa thanked the community people for the cooperation and commitment since the project started adding that the people of the Gola forest and Kambui communities have so much of passion for conservation and have manifested it with the PAPFor project.

He reported that, communities with community forests have been identified and documented,

and the project has signed a memorandum of understanding with community landowners in seven communities. He emphasized that, before the project ends, they would ensure that all gazetted community forests are mapped, zoned and committee members trained in their roles and responsibilities. He also reported that community eco-guards had been trained and deployed in the various communities to help in the protection of the forests. Other updates were also provided including establishment of school nature clubs (SNCs), production of a draft School Nature Club Manual for Teachers by GRC-LG, Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL) and CSSL, and the conduct of roadshows and various media activities to popularise the project across the world.



Group photo of participants at the Zimmi Community Barray in Zimmi, Makpele chiefdom, Pujehun district.



PC Alamin Kanneh of Koya chiefdom addressing the assembly in Joru, Gaura chiefdom in Kenema district.



BIOPAMA Project Concludes Stakeholder Consultative Engagement on Protection of Kambui Hills Forest Reserve.

Kambui Hills Forest Reserve (KHFR) is one of the biological hotspots left in West Africa that requires serious protection. The Reserve forms part of the Upper Guinean Forest and by extension, a part of the greater Gola Landscape which explains its uniqueness. Thus, the growth of countless threats posed to the Reserve is gaining an alarming rate and a call for immediate actions.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), with support from the Biodiversity and Protection Areas Management (BIOPAMA) programme is therefore, currently working with relevant government institutions, including the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), the Division of Forestry, Office of National Security, and KHFR stakeholders of Kenema district towards the protection of the reserve.

The project specifically aims at contributing to the improvement of long term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources of KHFR. One of the ways this could be achieved is by closely working with key actors (state and non-state actors alike), Paramount Chiefs (PCs) and forest edge communities to enhance better forest management, capacity development and governance. CSSL therefore organises quarterly consultative meetings with key stakeholders to provide them with updates on the progress of the project and also seek their support to ensure the achievement of the set objectives. One of such meetings was held on 26th July, 2021 at Chinese Farm in Kenema.

The meeting was chaired by the Paramount Chief of Koya chiefdom, PC Alamin Kanneh. He welcomed

participants and mentioned that although government is the central focus for the protection of the reserve, but the stakeholders also have a key role to play in that direction. He emphasized the need for community efforts towards conservation rather than engaging themselves in destroying the forest. He attributed all the destructive activities to being a key cause to most of the natural disasters in Sierra Leone and the world generally, and encouraged all to put hands on the deck to save the environment through forest protection and associated means.

The Project Manager, Mr. Aruna Koroma, delivered a PowerPoint presentation on progress of the project, including activities accomplished within the quarter and those planned for the next quarter. He also acknowledged the efforts of the NPAA and Division of Forestry for their immense effort given to CSSL so far. Mr. Koroma noted that, their collaborative support was one of the ways they all could benefit from each other's technical experience and expertise. In spite of all the massive threats perpetrated on the reserve through anthropogenic activities, the Project Manager said, from the ecosystem assessment survey conducted, it was discovered that the KHFR has unique ecosystems, landscapes of global importance with rich in biodiversity, and enormous potential for tourism.

The Eastern Regional Coordinator of NPAA, Mr. Sullay Mohamed provided updates on the status of the boundary demarcation exercise and its challenges. He said, the demarcation process had started in the south of Kambui, Small Bo chiefdom, followed by Nongowa chiefdom. He continued that, with the

current trend of infrastructural development taking place in both chiefdoms, there are serious concerns of encroachment into the reserve. There is therefore, need for strategic collaboration among all and sundry to ensure the protection of the KHFR.

The Paramount Chief of Niawa chiefdom, PC Mariama Jaward Tiamah expressed gratitude on behalf of her chiefdom for CSSL's intervention towards the protection of the reserve. "What do we actually do to revive the Kambui Forest; or do we have to allow our forest to be completely degraded, while we sit by doing nothing?" PC Mariama posed this question to all present at the meeting, citing the lack of effort from communities to sustain livelihoods support provided to them by various projects both in the past and present. She called communities through their representatives at the meeting to be self-supportive rather than depending wholly on projects for their survival. She also encouraged her colleague chiefs to regulate the use of chainsaws in their community forests. Similar sentiments were also re-echoed by other key stakeholders including the Kenema District Forestry Officer and representatives from the Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO), Office of the National Security (ONS) and Kenema District Council among others.

Text & photo: Dauda/CSSL

BIOPAMA Project Concludes Stakeholder Consultative Engagement on Protection of Kambui Hills Forest Reserve. Cont.

Text: Bobson Kobba/CSSL & A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL
Photo: CSSL



KHFR stakeholders at the Chinese Farm facility after the engagement.

BftW Supports Wildlife Week Celebrations in Freetown.



World Wildlife Week is celebrated all over the world from 2nd to 8th October every year with the view of protecting and preserving wild animals and plants from extinction. The event encourages youths around the world to rally together to address ongoing major threats to wildlife including habitat change, over-exploitation or illicit trafficking of endangered animal species. Youth are the agents of change; in fact, the positive impacts on conservation issues made by some young conservation leaders around the world is already evident. The theme for 2021 was, 'Forest and Livelihoods; sustaining people and planet'. With support from Bread for the World (BftW) in Germany, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) celebrated the week with series of awareness raising and advocacy related activities, including radio programs, hiking and field trip to the Western Area Peninsula National Park in Western Area Rural district, for CSSL staff and school

nature club pupils. The objective was to promote the relevance of wildlife conservation among school children and the general public through the aforementioned activities.

The activities started off with hiking by the CSSL Freetown based staff. This was meant to enable the staff in the administrative and other management categories to get more knowledge about the Western Area Peninsula National Park, and also accord them the opportunity to see the newly constructed eco-lodge in the Park.

A field trip to the CSSL Eco-lodge at the Big Water community was also organised for School Nature Club pupils, teachers and key stakeholders.

At the eco-lodge, the caretaker Headman of Big Water community, Mr. Manso Sesay welcomed all and expressed profound appreciation for CSSL's work in both the National Park and his community.

He underscored the relevance of not only keeping the forest, but also keeping school children abreast with conservation related activities. He promised to continue working with CSSL and relevant partners to raise awareness in his community about wildlife conservation and protection of the National Park.

Dr. Sheku Kamara, Executive Director of CSSL thanked everyone present including representatives from ministries, department and agencies, CSSL Board of Trustees and the school pupils for leaving their busy schedules and school sessions to attend the program.

Mr. Anthony Koroma from the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry said, he was thrilled by the presence of school children for such celebration, noting that they are the actors of change in the society and would be the future leaders and ambassadors for nature. He emphasised the importance of wildlife (plants and animals alike), and how they support in the ecological balance of nature. He also threw light on the dangers behind poaching, associating the act with outbreak of zoonotic diseases like Ebola, COVID, etc. Mr. Koroma added that, poaching also results to habitat loss,

BftW Supports Wildlife Week Celebrations in Freetown. Cont.

extinction of endangered species. He encouraged all to do more awareness raising programs to ensure conservation and protection of wildlife.

The Deputy Secretary General of CSSL's Board of Trustees, Mrs Elizabeth Kamara said, she was very happy to visit the National Park and the eco-lodge that has been constructed by CSSL through support received from BftW. "This will help create jobs for youths in Big Water community, and also stimulate community development through eco-tourism", she added. Mrs Kamara also expressed how pleased she was at seeing school children participate in environmental conservation programs. She noted that, global warming and associated diseases are attendant effects of climate change; and diseases contracted from animals are all happening because people are seriously interfering with wildlife and destroying nature.

Madam Memuna Banya, Deputy Caretaker Headwoman of Big Water community said, the celebration helped her understand more about wildlife. She thanked CSSL for involving their community school to the event. She encouraged all school children to pass on the knowledge to their friends and relatives.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Charles Showers, President of CSSL's Board of Trustees said, the eco-lodge was built at Big Water to help protect that portion of the National Park including important species for tourist attractions and future generations. He encouraged them to look for more ways to continue supporting the protection of the forest.

Several other speakers also made statements emphasising on the need to further strengthen the protection of the National Parks and reserves across the country.

The two Biodiversity Officers at CSSL, Papanie Bai Sesay and Abdulai Dauda delivered brief lectures to the assembly, particularly for the participating school children, their teachers and community people. This was to increase their knowledge about wildlife conservation and its importance. They mentioned various protected animal species such as Picathartes, Pigmy Hippos, the Columbus, Chimpanzees, Gola Malimbe, etc. and urged everyone to work with CSSL to protect the forest.



School pupils listening to lectures on biodiversity conservation by the CSSL Biodiversity Officers.



Mrs Elizabeth Kamara, Deputy Secretary General – CSSL's Board of Trustees delivering a statement.

Text: A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL

Photos: Kathrin/CSSL & A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL

MAVA Foundation Supports Formation of Local Watch and Alert Committees in Sierra Leone.

With support from MAVA Foundation through the Regional Partnership for Conservation of the Coastal and Marine Zone in Africa (PRCM), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), in collaboration with the Environment Protection Agency – Sierra Leone (EPA-SL) began rolling out activities to mitigate the negative impacts of imminent oil pollution on the marine coastal environment and nearby communities. One of such activities was the establishment of Local Watch and Alert Committees in 7 coastal communities in Sierra Leone.

The activities were conducted from 9th through 13th October, 2021 and targeted Rokupr, Mambolo, Sulima, Gbondapi, Shenge, Aberdeen and Tombo communities in Kambia, Pujehun, Moyamba and Western Area Urban and Rural districts respectively. The committees constitute critical walks of life that are linked directly or indirectly to marine related resources. They include boat-owners, wayfarers/boat operators, fishermen, fishmongers, farmers, harbor masters, designated local fishery and maritime officials, and local authorities among others.

The engagements were led by representatives from COGaPE (the Coalition on Oil and Gas Pollution on the Environment) that included CSSL (which is the lead organization), Civil Society on Climate Change and the Environment and the Consortium of National Fishermen's Unions.



The formation of these committees was also used as a means to pass on sensitization key messages to communities on the hazards of oil and gas pollution on marine life, and how this also has serious negative implications on the socio-economic lives of coastal communities and the country generally.

In all the locations covered, the team took time to explain to community key stakeholders and other community members about the relevance of constituting themselves into committees to help in monitoring their respective marine environment relative to oil and gas activities.

Generally, community members and selected committee members expressed profound thanks and appreciation to COGaPE for selecting their locations for the formation of these committees:

and to MAVA Foundation for providing the funds for the implementation of the project. According to the Paramount Chief (PC) of Mambolo chiefdom in Kambia district, PC Somanor Anlion III, he said the formation of COGaPE was one of the best things that has so far happened in Sierra Leone in attempting to save the marine environment. *“As I'm the current President of the Sierra Leone Boat Owners Association, on behalf of my association, I want to officially register our intention and commitment to join the membership of COGaPE. Our work as boat owners who ply the water, routes daily stand to be adversely affected by oil and gas activities should any oil pollution happen”*, PC Somanor III expressed. Also, a lady, Madam Fatmata K. Sesay in Gbondapi in Pujehun district registered her

MAVA Foundation Supports Formation of Local Watch and Alert Committees in Sierra Leone. Cont.

commitment to work collaboratively with other committee members to report any oil related incident observed around their marine environment. *“We are a predominantly fishing community and therefore, it is directly linked to our livelihood, our health and our safety”*, Madam Sesay maintained.



CSSL's EE Officer, Mariama Kargbo in engagement with participants @ Gbondapi in Pujehun district.



A member of COGaPE, David J. Allieu explaining the relevance of the Alert Committee @ Tombo in the Western Area Rural district of Sierra Leone.

Text: A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL
Photos: A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL

The Spring Alive Program Promotes Bird Nests Protection in Sierra Leone.



In an effort to promote increased environmental knowledge among school children and bird club members, CSSL, with funds from Heidelberg Cement, has been celebrating the Spring Alive Programme for many years. The Spring Alive Programme is a wonderful opportunity to engage young and interested people to nature and especially to birds, their habitats and their role for biodiversity.

This year, CSSL again received support from the aforementioned institutions to organise a biodiversity sensitization for school children.

The 2021 theme: “Protecting bird nests”

During the course of the one-day programme organised at the West Africa Methodist Collegiate School in Freetown on 17th November 2021, a lot was learnt about the importance of birds and why bird nest protection is crucial for biodiversity. The participants had the chance to discuss the topic and present their ideas and learnings to the whole group at the close of day. We are very happy to know that the School Nature Club students together with their Teacher Coordinators and the Bird Club members will spread the information and the new knowledge they have gained during the programme with their schools, families, and neighbourhoods.

Interview with Andrea Haffner, CSSL's Community Mobilization Officer

On the occasion of the programme we interviewed Andrea Haffner, our Community Mobilization Officer and enthusiastic bird watcher about the importance of bird nest protection:

The Spring Alive Program Promotes Bird Nests Protection in Sierra Leone.

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Mrs. Haffner, the topic of Spring Alive 2021 is “Protecting Bird Nests”. To start from the beginning: Why do birds build their nests?

Thank you. That is a very important question to aid in understanding why bird nest protection is crucial. There are different reasons why birds build nests. One obvious one is that they lay and incubate their eggs in the nests and they raise their chicks in the nests when they hatch. Nests protect birds from bad weather and from predators. And of course, they use their nests to roost. To make it simple: the nests are their houses. They use them like we human beings use our houses. They built their nests because of similar reasons why humans build houses.

Why is it important to protect birds and bird nests?

As I said before, nests are the homes of the birds. Destroying their homes will mean destroying the bird population as their breeding will be affected, eggs and chicks will be exposed to predation and the birds themselves exposed to external threat.

When we protect bird nests, we also protect birds. And birds are very important for several reasons. They are environmental health indicators- the abundance and diversity of birds recorded over time indicates the health status of the environment. Birds help in pollination of several plants which contributes towards having a larger variety of available food and fruits. They help reduce weeds. Scavenging birds serve to clean up the environment off carrion. Birds also control some pests especially insects which is of help to our farmers. They help in fertilization. And last but not least: Birdwatching connects us to nature. They are wonderful creatures which have a right to live as every other creature on earth.

Which is your favourite bird in terms of nest building? Which are the most amazing bird nests we can find here in Sierra Leone?

It's difficult to say. There are so many ways birds built their nests- some simple with a few leaves and twigs whilst others elaborate with varying shapes. They can be high up on roof tops, or on tree branches, and in hollow trees whilst others prefer to build on window sills or other quiet edges or nooks of a house.

What are the biggest threats to bird nests and to birds?

There are several threatening processes driving declines in bird populations. Foremost among them are the spread of agriculture which puts 1,126 threatened birds (77%) at risk. Logging and wood harvesting is impacting 763 species (52%) and invasive species threaten 473 (32%) of threatened species. These numbers are statistics published by the BirdLife International. In all this, we destroy important habitat and destroy nature.

What can every one of us do, to help to protect bird nests and save the biodiversity of Sierra Leone?

Leave them alone! Respect the habitat of birds and all other animals. They have been there before us. It was their home before it became our home, our field, our garden. Welcome them when they choose to build their nest close to your home. But leave them alone. They will thank you with their wonderful songs in the morning.



A group photo of participants after the orientation session at the WAM Collegiate School in Freetown.

**Text: Kathrin / CSSL & Andrea / CSSL
Photo: Kathrin / 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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Visit us @:
86A Main Road, Congo Town, Freetown

Contact us @:
margaret.ngaujah@cs-sl.org/
abdul.dumbuya@cs-sl.org/info@cs-sl.org
+232-76-643546/+232-76-325732

Or find us on Facebook: @conservationsl

