

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

Connecting people to nature.



In this issue

TOPIC 1

Five Years after the Landslide:
A New Threat Appears at
Mortomeh

TOPIC 2

Protecting Sierra Leone's
KBAs

TOPIC 3

Monitoring development of
planted trees

TOPIC 4

The BirdLife International
Family - The Power of Many

TOPIC 5

CSSL's Board of Trustees
Undertakes a Familiarization
Visit to Gola Rainforest

TOPIC 6

A Road Map to COP 27 - The
Africa Palm Oil Initiative
(APOI) in Transition

From the President, CSSL's Board of Trustees

Dear Readers,

Dear Friends and Partners,

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) continues to promote the sustainable and wise use of our natural resources with the support of our esteemed partners.

In this issue, we are happy to inform our partners and membership about CSSL's participation in Birdlife's 100 year anniversary World Congress, held in Cambridge, UK in September. We also bring you several other stories including a working visit conducted by the Board of Trustees of CSSL to the Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee for the first time.

As you enjoy reading this edition, please do check our website also for more interesting news on CSSL's activities.

Please continue to support us.

Happy reading!



Charles Showers
President, CSSL



Five Years after the Landslide: A New Threat Appears at Mortomeh

In the early hours of 14th August 2017, Sierra Leone woke up to witness a huge catastrophe at Mortomeh, at the foot of Mount Sugarloaf, west of Freetown. Residents of the area still remember the tremendous noise that followed the shaking of the earth. Until today, everyone in Freetown can tell where he or she was, when it happened. We are talking about the big landslide which buried a lot of houses and took more than 1,000 lives.

On 18th August 2022, five years after the catastrophe, a team from the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) went to the site of the landslide to meet and discuss with key stakeholders (community members and representatives from relevant government agencies) on the current situation at Mortomeh, and to see which measures had been undertaken so far to avert a second August 14.

**“I am very concerned about the situation. We need a joint effort now to tell people that they have to move to save their lives”,
says Madam Metzger, headwoman at Regent village**

Even before the team got to Mortomeh, residents had already reported about a huge new crack which was visible some days back. The team first thought the new crack would be on the side of the mountain where the landslide had happened, just to find out that the crack is on the side where the houses of community people are. The crack is very long, and continues along the whole mountain. It can be traced over paths, along houses, through houses and over new construction sites. It is very alarming to see that this crack is already some centimetres wide at some places. It goes through a big part of the so-called Yellow Zone.

Conservationists' main concern is a recurrence of this situation in the near future. Looking around Freetown, there is the sight of construction activities everywhere. Most construction sites were years ago, areas where our eyes were pleased with a green forest cover overlooking the hills on the Western Peninsula. Many of these hills could be the next site of a catastrophe. We cannot entirely call them natural catastrophes since they are man-made. They happen because of the way we change the environment through deforestation, construction and agriculture. So, man is largely responsible; and it is man also who can make the change by stopping deforestation and taking reforestation seriously.

For more information about the situation visit <https://cs-sl.org/mortomeh-landslide/>



Protecting Sierra Leone's Biodiversity: CSSL takes the lead in the national KBA Programme

Sierra Leone is well known for its high degree of biodiversity. The country's rainforests as well as the coastal areas have a very high density when it comes to flora and fauna. To ensure the protection and conservation of key biodiversity areas and its biodiversity in the country, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) has taken the lead in establishing a Sierra Leone's KBA National Coordination Working Group with professionals from diverse fields.

The Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) Programme was founded by some of the best-known international organisations when it comes to environment and nature. Organisations like World Wildlife Fund (WWF), BirdLife International, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF), among others are part of this programme.

The KBA Programme has the vision of establishing an international network and a global database of KBAs around the globe. The aim of this network and the international cooperation is the conservation and protection of species on a global level because, every species plays an important role in the balance of ecosystems and the survival of mankind. To get more information about the KBA programme, please visit: www.keybiodiversityareas.org

Moving forward on the way to identify and recognise Sierra Leone's Key Biodiversity Areas

In March 2022, CSSL conducted a three-day workshop to train key stakeholders on how to identify and recognise Sierra Leone's KBAs and the various steps with which to get the KBAs recognised on the international level. During this workshop, the discussion about the establishment of a KBA National Coordination Group (NCG) was initiated.

As a follow up to this, the Society organised a meeting on 23rd August 2022, where a technical committee was established, reviewed the draft ToR of the NCG and also identified potential donors to support KBA initiatives in Sierra Leone. "We know about the amazing biodiversity we have in our country. What we have to do now is to establish a committee and follow up on all the steps required to identify the KBAs in Sierra Leone and then seek international recognition for them", the Programme Manager at CSSL, Edward Sesay stated in his welcome address.

"Biodiversity is the answer to climate change. Diversity in species will give us the resilience we need to face the consequences of climate change we are experiencing today."

Dr. Okoni-Williams, the Technical Lead for the workshop

More information:
<https://cs-sl.org/starting-kba-programme/>



Tree planting is not enough! Monitoring and longterm support is needed

Reforestation techniques have to be introduced

When one attends a meeting about reforestation and conservation, it seems like Sierra Leone wants to become a world champion in planting trees. Everyone is planting trees. But how many of such trees do really survive and become fully grown trees? We know about stories that areas which were meant for reforestation are cleared again, and houses or roads are built on the same place where environmentalists had planted seedlings some months earlier.

The little trees are growing

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is not alone in the battle to protect the forest and reforest the hills around the Western Area Peninsula. We are not the only institution that is knowledgeable about the huge problems facing the sustainability of tree planting activities. One important part of our planning, when we organise tree planting activities, is the involvement of communities.

This approach helps the Society to reinforce a sense of community ownership and reassurance of full responsibility to protect new trees. Monitoring and follow-up visits to the places where trees were previously planted also forms part of CSSL's plans for its tree planting activities, as the first two years are very crucial for the survival of seedlings and new trees. Once they survive during this period, it is very likely that they will be strong enough to grow - provided they are not disturbed by human activities.

Marking this year's World Environment Day, CSSL organised tree planting activities on the compounds of its School Nature Clubs and in one of its operational communities, Tombo in the Western Area Rural district. Three (3) months after the tree planting exercise, the Society began conducting the first follow-up visits to the sites, and is expected to continue through October.

Tombo community was the first to be targeted, where community members had earlier raised the request for CSSL to support them with seedlings. Mariama Kargbo and Abdulai Dauda, CSSL's Environmental Education Officer and Biodiversity Officer respectively, visited the site along with some community members. The seedlings were observed to be growing slowly. However, the team found a lot of elephant grass at the site which begs the need for CSSL to continue to provide support on how communities should handle the newly planted trees to enable them grow faster with less weed-competition and disturbance.

"Tree planting is not enough. It is very important to monitor seedlings and help them to grow properly for sustainable reforestation. CSSL is here to support communities in their efforts to protect environment and the source of their livelihood."
Abdulai Dauda, CSSL Assistant Biodiversity Manager



The Power of Many - Join CSSL and the BirdLife International Family to Save the Planet

From 11th to 16th September 2022, the world's largest environmental partnership meeting was held at Cambridge, UK. BirdLife International celebrated its 100th anniversary with its 115 partner organisations around the globe.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is the BirdLife partner in Sierra Leone. Being part of this global family reinforces the feeling of the power of many in our daily work, and even more at international congresses like the one in Cambridge. It was good to meet friends and partners from around the world again personally to exchange ideas, share challenges and develop solutions together. One might be tempted to think that BirdLife focuses on birds alone. But this is not so; the work of the partner organisations is as diverse as the ecosystems are.

BirdLife's 10-year strategy is built on four pillars: Species, Sites, Systems and Society. We aim to protect species and habitats through the change of systems and together with the people.

To save biodiversity, BirdLife Partners around the globe work with community members, civil society and government. Climate change is the biggest threat to our civilization. None of us can win the battle alone. We only have a chance if people all around the globe work towards the same goal: saving biodiversity and nature. With global warming and the rise of sea levels, many places on earth will not be habitable anymore.

The scientific data proves that, this is not just a bad version of the future that might happen, but it is a fact. This is the future which is waiting for us only some years ahead. People will have to move and find new places to live. Animals and plants will have to adapt to the changing climate. The question is: will we all manage to do so?

“Birds are our early warning system. When birds disappear, we know we have to act fast.”

Despite the alarming facts and the serious state of the world's future, the partners are sure that if we act as one, we can still make a change.

We believe in the power of many. We are many; but we have to become more! If you want to support our work and be part of the global family to save the planet, become a member of CSSL today. Here, you will find more information about CSSL membership.

“We know: nature can survive without us - but we cannot survive without nature!”

Read more about the global family, it's 100 years celebration and the power of many:
<https://cs-sl.org/the-power-of-many/>



CSSL's Board of Trustees Undertakes a Familiarization Visit to Gola Rainforest

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone has been implementing the conservation of biodiversity in the Gola Rainforest since 1992, when it was a logging forest concession.

The Society was very instrumental together with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and BirdLife International in getting it upgraded to a forest reserve and later declared a National Park in 2011.

This is the first visit by the Board of Trustees of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone to the now Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee, led by the CSSL President Charles Showers. The objectives of the trip included getting the Board to familiarize themselves with GRC-LG management and activities, physically visit the National Park and explore, meet with community people and gauge staff's experience on their operations.

The CSSL Board was very impressed as this is their first on-the-spot visit to the GRCLG and it gave them an insight into the day-to-day management of the best-managed protected area in Sierra Leone.

On Tuesday 26th October, 2022 members of the CSSL Board of Trustees paid a courtesy call on the management of GRCLG facilitated by GRCLG.

After a few hours at the GRCLG Headquarters at Dama Road for introductions, the team headed for Lalehun.

On the next day, staff from the Research, Community Development and Tourism divisions gave presentations on the great achievements and strides that the Gola Programme has achieved since its inception in 2011.

Board of Trustees were impressed and asked questions to familiarize themselves with the operations of GRCLG.

In the area of experiencing what staff experience, the Kenema to Lalehun road was such an experience that Board of Trustees really slept well after that journey.

The Board of Trustees really appreciated the trip and hope that more of such trips will be facilitated in the future.

Staff at Lalehun did their best to make the Board members happy during their stay.



text: Charles Showers, President CSSL



A Roadmap to COP 27 - The Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) in Transition

Five years after the Marrakesh Declaration for sustainable development of the palm oil sector in Africa, the Tropical Forest Alliance Africa Palm Oil Initiative Sierra Leone (APOI SL) Platform led a delegation on the 27th September 2022 to engage the Minister of Environment, Hon. Prof. Foday M. Jaward, regarding the transition from a single commodity - Palm Oil, to a Multi-Commodity Initiative including Cocoa, Coffee, Cashew, rubber etc. The purpose was also to get the commitment of government for the signing of the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative (ASCI) Declaration at COP 27, alongside 9 other countries - Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Central Africa Republican, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Edo State (Nigeria) and Republic of Congo, all of which account for 75% of Africa's forests. Members of the delegation included Abraham Baffoe, Africa Director of Proforest - a UK based international organisation; Dr Sheku Kamara, Executive Director of Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL); Madam Kate Karemo-Garnett, Director of Forestry and Edward Sessay, Programme Manager of CSSL.

APOI SL has been working towards transitioning the palm oil sector in Sierra Leone to a driver of low carbon, sustainable development in the country. It has a vision for a prosperous palm oil industry which brings jobs and wealth to local communities but one which is environmentally and socially sustainable, and protects the rich tropical forests of the region.

From Single to Multiple Commodity Initiative

In Sierra Leone, after becoming a signatory to the Marrakesh Declaration on the 16th November 2016 at the UNFCCC COP22 in Marrakesh, the country's APOI team was formed into a national platform. The platform has 18 member institutions and organisations which includes Government, Private Sector and Civil Society Organisations, with whom it had developed national principles and national action plans to guide the country programme operations.

The Africa Sustainable Commodity Initiative (ASCI) builds and expands upon the principles agreed at CoP22 in 2016 for the palm oil sector, which was signed by seven African governments including Sierra Leone. The 'Marrakesh Declaration for Sustainable Development of the Palm Oil Sector' acknowledged the role of agricultural commodity development as a driver of deforestation, while emphasising the critical role of forests and forest conservation in addressing climate change.

The ASCI is a single set of principles for the responsible production of agricultural commodities in Africa; protecting forests, good governance and transparency, while ensuring social benefits for farmers, communities, marginalised peoples and their human rights.

The high level engagement with the Minister of Environment, a new Ministry created by the President H.E. Dr Julius Maada Bio, formed the penultimate leg of the Road Map to COP 27 in Egypt, to take place early November 2022.



JOIN US AND HELP TO SAVE NATURE!

Do you want to support our work and help to protect nature?
Call us or write to us and **become a member of CSSL!**

Contact us via Email info@cs-sl.org
or whatsapp 076 325732

**WE FOR NATURE.
NATURE FOR US.**

**We thank our partners
for their support!**



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