



Pied Kingfisher by Kathrin Prinzing

## From the President of CSSL Board

Dear valued readers,

Even though the new year is not completely new anymore, I would like to wish you all a happy, peaceful and prosperous new year. Let's hope that the year 2024 will bring positive actions towards nature conservation and sustainable livelihood for our people.



The last months of 2023 were very busy for the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL); a new board for CSSL was elected, we organized a conference on Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation to put the Wildlife Act on the spotlight, our team in Kabala engaged strongly for advocating for the protection of Lake Sonfon with a positive outcome, and more. We are also happy to share two wonderful stories from the Gola landscape.

These stories and many more compelling ones are waiting for you in this edition of our newsletter. As always, I am wishing you happy reading!

Charles Showers  
President of Board, CSSL

# Spotlight on Sierra Leone's Wildlife Act

CSSL organizes Conference on Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation during Wildlife Week 2023



Conference participants by Kathrin Prinzing

On 5th October, right in the middle of Wildlife Week Celebrations 2023, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) played host to key stakeholders in the conservation sector, including like-minded organisations, government representatives and the media to discuss better partnerships for Wildlife Conservation.

“Wildlife Conservation is key to protect and conserve biodiversity, ensure human health and stabilize ecosystems. When we talk about Wildlife Conservation, we are not only talking about wild animals, but everything that is not domesticated. We talk about animals and plants; Flora and Fauna. We have a Wildlife Act in Sierra Leone, but what exactly is it saying about wildlife protection, and is it really enforced? How can we build stronger partnerships to ensure Wildlife Conservation in our country? These are the questions we want to answer today”, stated Edward Sesay, Head of Programmes, CSSL, during his welcome address at the Conference on Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation.

The statements of podium participants and open discussions unveiled the state of Wildlife Conservation through existing laws as well as gaps and challenges. The 1972 Wildlife Act was reviewed in 2022, but mainly updated the fines. It is still stated in the act that the killing of precious species such as the chimpanzee, elephants or others is not reprimanded for with a high fine. “Other countries set high fines for killing of wildlife. In Kenya, for example, people get a life prison sentence, OR pay the equivalence in Kenyan Shillings of 200,000 US-Dollars when they kill an antelope. This is real wildlife conservation.

People will think twice whether it is worth to kill an animal or not when there are high fines,” Bashiru Koroma from the National Tourist Board asserted. Participants saw the urgent need for a review of the entire act, to significantly increase fines and the numbers of protected species.

Apart from having strong laws, capacity building, awareness raising, and knowledge campaigns are needed to supplement the Wildlife Act. Harold Williams, representing the media and ENFORAC, emphasized that, “conservationists should collaborate stronger with the youth and local communities. They have to understand the benefits of wildlife conservation. Educate youth and local authorities about the consequences of taking wild animals to the villages and homes... there is need to close the knowledge gap. We need to educate people about the interconnections between health and wildlife conservation.” “Awareness and knowledge are not enough,” added Barbar Turay, a representative from the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA). “Forest guards and other entities that are in charge of protecting wildlife and habitats need to be equipped properly.

Knowledge, technical and financial support should be allocated to the respective entities. There is also need for better collaboration between government bodies for clarity of mandates”, he emphasised.

These conflicting mandates, as some people call them, weaken government’s implementation of the Wildlife Act, while also discouraging compliance among citizens in the country. Who should be contacted when someone is spotted acting against the Wildlife Act? Which government body will take care of recaptured animals? Is there any line for citizens to contact when they want to report an offense?

To improve wildlife conservation and enable citizens to help to protect our wildlife, knowledge campaigns are needed, an official contact is necessary and every offender against the Wildlife Act has to be pursued and punished with a serious fine or prison sentence.

**How can partnerships boost wildlife conservation?**

The discussions showed that, close collaboration between different government bodies like the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change are needed to protect habitats of wildlife. In the same moment, partnerships, and coordination between government and CSOs can improve knowledge level and awareness of communities and the general public regarding the importance of wildlife conservation for the well-being of humans. For this goal, the media, faith-based organisations, schools and community leaders should be part of strong partnerships for wildlife conservation.

“We need to use the partnerships to get everyone involved. But at the end, we have to bring the responsibility to the institutions in charge and make them account for their performance,” mentioned Edward Aruna, Founder and Director of RAP-SL at the conference.

During the conference, many gaps and challenges were discussed but – and this is the important part – the focus was on solutions, partnerships to improve wildlife conservation and a common way forward. CSSL thanks all participants for their open discussions, inputs, sharing of experiences, critical views, and goal-oriented commitments. CSSL will continue to advocate in order for the gaps and challenges to be addressed for an improved Wildlife Act in the future, and for a more responsible citizenry in the country.



*“Wildlife Conservation needs us all. It is not only government, it is not only civil society, it is not only education that is needed. All of us, all institutions, all individuals play their important part to protect our wildlife, our biodiversity and our natural wealth.”*



Edward M- Sesay  
Head of Programs, CSSL

by Kathrin Prinzing

**Help to protect our wildlife!**

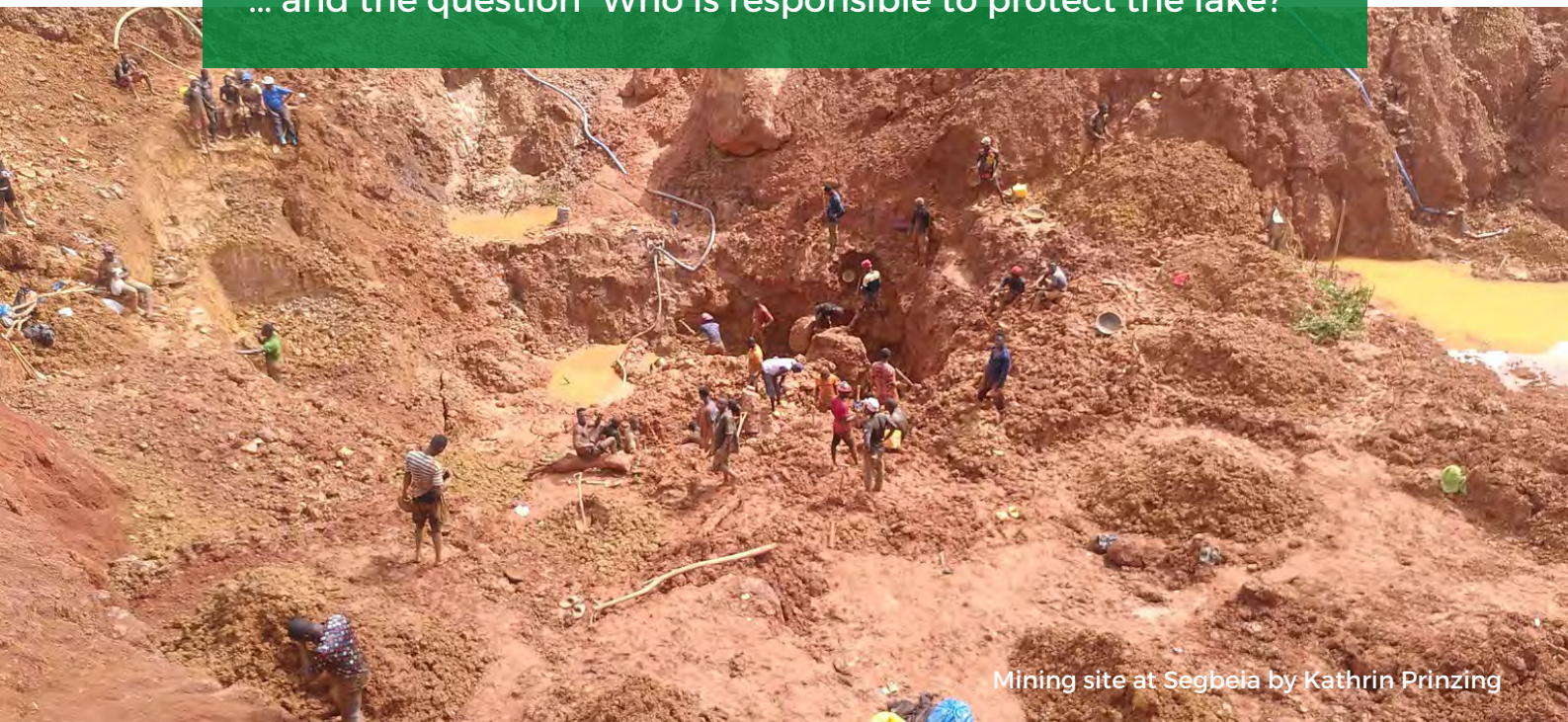
Even though wild animals are protected through the Wildlife Act, many people are not aware it. Support us to spread awareness and let people know, why wild animals belong to the wild, NOT in our homes.

You find our poster and stickers for awareness raising campaigns on our website:  
<https://cs-sl.org/animals-belong-to-the-wild/>



# The state of illegal mining at Lake Sonfon

... and the question “Who is responsible to protect the lake?”



Mining site at Segbeia by Kathrin Prinzing

Lake Sonfon is one of the rare mountainous lakes in West Africa, and one of the largest inland lakes in Sierra Leone. Located in the North of the country in Diang chiefdom, it is far away from the attention of the wider public. It is still not known to many that the lake surprises its visitors with its unique environment, plants, animals and birds. Being at Lake Sonfon will accord you the experience of special fragrant smell of the herbs and flowers growing therein, which is not easily found in many other places in the country. The lake is also home to embedded bird species like the Emerald Starling. It is a key biodiversity area, classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and one of the proposed protected areas of Sierra Leone.

## Conserving Lake Sonfon for people and nature can work!

One of the biggest threats to Lake Sonfon, its biodiversity and the livelihood of the communities around the lake is water pollution and destruction of the ecosystem through mining. The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) has been working in and around Lake Sonfon for several years now, raising public awareness on the importance of conserving the lake as well as supporting communities with alternative livelihood options other than mining. The Conservation Society works closely with communities, local authorities, and the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) in its quest to achieve all of these.

All, therefore, celebrated a great success in 2021 when illicit mining was managed to be halted inside the proposed protected area and the buffer zone.

## When foreign companies started mining with official licenses, several community mining sites were reopened - the fight to protect the lake starts again.

Earlier this year, the designated CSSL field staff at Lake Sonfon reported about resumption of mining activities by foreign companies inside the buffer zone of the proposed protected area. These activities are reported to be polluting the lake itself, and adversely affecting communities along the Pampana River, the only outgoing water source from the lake. As though this is not enough, Pampana River also hosts numerous mining activities which continue to compound more environmental problems relating to pollution of water sources in that part of the country. On 15th August 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) together with the Sierra Leone Police and environmental actors arrested and destroyed several dredge mining equipment along the Pampana River to demonstrate EPA's resolve to eliminate all sorts of illegal mining activities along the river and at the lake. Still, the full dimension of mining at Lake Sonfon is not yet clear until proper

assessments and regular field visits are undertaken to document and consciously act to end illegal mining in the area.

**Data collection is key: CSSL team documents the state of illegal mining around and inside Lake Sonfon**

On 26th and 27th September, a team from CSSL went to document the current state of illegal mining in and around the lake, with very alarming findings. The former mining sites at Kikifarma and Sumuni, which were deserted in 2021 after sustained and coordinated actions from all actors, were discovered to have resurfaced. From the Western shore of Lake Sonfon, the huge mining sites, including workers and terrifying sounds of mining equipment at Kikifarma are visible and clear on the other side of the lake even without the use of binoculars. The mining in these two communities is especially dangerous for the turtle population which lives close by. The turtles are not only distracted by the mining itself but also the rather sustained water pollution ravaging their habitat. Continuing further South along the lake, the CSSL team witnessed and documented several small-scale mining sites owned by community people. Even though they are small scale, they cause a huge amount of environmental destruction as the soil is ruined, waste is left behind, big pits dug out and left open, and there are no reclamation plans.

Close to Mankoni, several small sites were also documented with serious water pollution along the narrow part of Lake Sonfon. The color of the water has changed completely. There are several places where community members run machines without any precautions against oil pollution on the lake. This part of the lake is one of the places which hosts a lot of the West Africa Dwarf Crocodile. Next to the community mining sites, the foreign company, DOGON, which is said to be having a license for a mining concession area around the lake (but not directly at the lake) is operating a big mining site at Mankoni. When the CSSL team went to this site, they were vigorously interrogated by a government deployed security personnel, and witnessed huge impact of the mining activities on the environment. The company was busy pumping muddy water out of the mining pit into the lake. During these activities, they had to relocate several crocodiles from the rather extensive pit. The company as well as communities operate with machines of low environmental standards which spill oil to the soil and water bodies.

At the North-west end of the lake is Segbeia, one of the mining villages abandoned in 2021, has now grown into a big village close to the lake. There is small scale mining which also directly affects the lake – the means of potable water for nearby animals and humans.

Following the road to the West from Segbeia, huge mining sites and deep pits are operated by communities. Community members risk their health and lives with no safety precautions during mining. It is obviously a risky and very dangerous business to embark on, especially for poor local communities. With little or no sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities available, many are, however, compelled to work in the mines to eke out a living for themselves and their poor families. Interviews with community members proved that most are aware of the illegality of their actions, but have limited or no other options for their daily survival, with the big multi-national companies worsening the situation of community people.



*“We have stopped mining in the protected area of Lake Sonfon. Through the engagements of CSSL, we understood that it is better for us not to mine close to the lake. But now the foreign companies have their licenses, and they chase us away from the mining sites where we were working. We don ´t have any other option now than to enter into the protected area again.”*

*Foday Jawara,  
Community Member*



CSSL staff engaging with miners at Segbeia by Kathrin Prinzing

Foday Jawara’s statement reflects the predicament of many other community members. When foreign companies send the community people away from their mining sites, they resort to reopening the sites close to the lake. This situation was attempted to be resolved by the Paramount Chief who designated a piece of land close to Bode Ose, a small community outside the buffer zone, for communities to undertake mining activities. This was however seen as not being enough to accommodate all community miners.

One challenge for the conservation of the lake is the lack of options for community members, but also the ignorance of foreign companies when it comes to the boundaries between their concession areas and the buffer zone of the protected area. At Dalakuru, at the South end of the lake where it flows into the Pampana River, mining activities from Chen-Li company are reported. The license of this company covers an area close to the lake but still outside the buffer zone. This company seems to be operating outside its licensed area, inside the protected area. There are more assessments needed to determine the full impact and the expanse of illegal mining at Lake Sonfon. CSSL took the first step in the second week of September to document the current state of mining at Lake Sonfon’s western shoreline.

Meanwhile, NPAA and EPA have recently taken some stringent actions to stop illegal mining at the lake. This is however, seen by many as a lot a little to address the grave prevailing situation. It is time to declare Lake Sonfon a protected area to ensure its conservation for nature and people.



*“With all that we have seen and learned through engagements of community members, CSSL volunteers, miners, and official reports – we are still left with the question: “Who is responsible to protect Lake Sonfon, and what will be done to conserve this unique environment, the cultural heritage of the Diang people and the livelihoods of communities around the lake?”*



*Abdul K. Dumbuya  
Communication Manager, CSSL*

*by Kathrin Prinzing*



DOGON mining site at Mankoni by Kathrin Prinzing

# New joint Climate Change Strategy and Communique for Western Area

ACCT launched the new strategy during the Climate Change Conference in October 2024



Deforestation at the Western Area Peninsula by Kathrin Prinzing

“We, the Climate Change Campaign Group of Western Area (...) recognize the outcomes of COP27 and acknowledge the urgent need for Climate Change action globally knowing that the impact of Climate Change presents an existential challenge.” With this paragraph, the communique of the newly formed Climate Change Campaign Group “Act on Climate Change Today (ACCT)” officially started. The communique was launched together with a Climate Change Advocacy Strategy and Plan on October 10th at the Freetown City Council in the presence of group members, representatives from government and national and international organizations.

ACCT was formed through a participative and inclusive process which started in August 2023 and led by Green Scenery with support from Trocaire. Part of this process was the development of a four-year advocacy strategy as well as a six-month implementation plan for the first steps to be taken, focusing on the Western Area Peninsula Forest. “As part of its Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan, the Campaign Group committed itself to working towards ensuring that by 2030, deforestation will be halted in the Protected Area, and forest cover increased by 50% from the current situation in 2023 within the Western Area Peninsula.” (Communique ACCT 2023)

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is part of the group and a signatory to the communique. In attendance also, were representatives from PACJA, Youth Alliance Sierra Leone, CEFCON, YARDO SL, CAN SL, EBAFOSA SL, WoNES, ENFORAC, Reptiles and Amphibians Program, SLAFU, SLAAFU, VAFRICA, WoNARPI, INFORAC, TAKUGAMA, EFA and representatives from Mongegba, No 2 River, Grafton, John Obey, Tombo, Mambo and Big Water communities.

The transformation of the perception of communities and officials regarding the use of the Western Area Peninsula Forest forms a core element of reaching the overall goal of the communique until 2030. The group’s composition of members from national environmental NGOs and CSOs as well as representatives from communities speaks volumes about its participatory approach to climate change mitigation interventions. The meetings were always open for government and international partners to participate to ensure that all are on the same page and work together towards the same goal: the protection of Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park.

Dr. Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella, Chairman of the Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Food Security, delivered the keynote address at the conference. He gave participants and membership of the group the much-needed hope for a stronger collaboration and cooperation from all stakeholders involved in achieving its set goals. It is expected that, with the current momentum, the group will be able to look back after five years and catalogue its achievements with pride.

The communique ends with the expression,

**“As a campaign group, we call on Government, international community, members of the public to think Global and act Local in the fight against Climate Change and support initiatives that will win this fight.”**

There is nothing more to add. It is time to act now.

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*by Kathrin Prinzing*

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The Western Area Peninsula Forest is under extreme pressure due to urbanisation, logging and stone mining. Everyone in and around Freetown can witness the fast decreasing of the forest cover and at the same time how nature is fighting back through floods, landslides and storms – like the one which brought down the famous Cotton Tree.

The forest on the hills of the peninsula is not only important as a home to many species but also as the water catchment area for Freetown and all people on the peninsula. When the forest is gone, there will be no water anymore.

Visit our website <https://cs-sl.org/videos/> or our youtube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@ConservationSocietySL> to watch our video documentary about “Our green lung and water catchment under threat”.

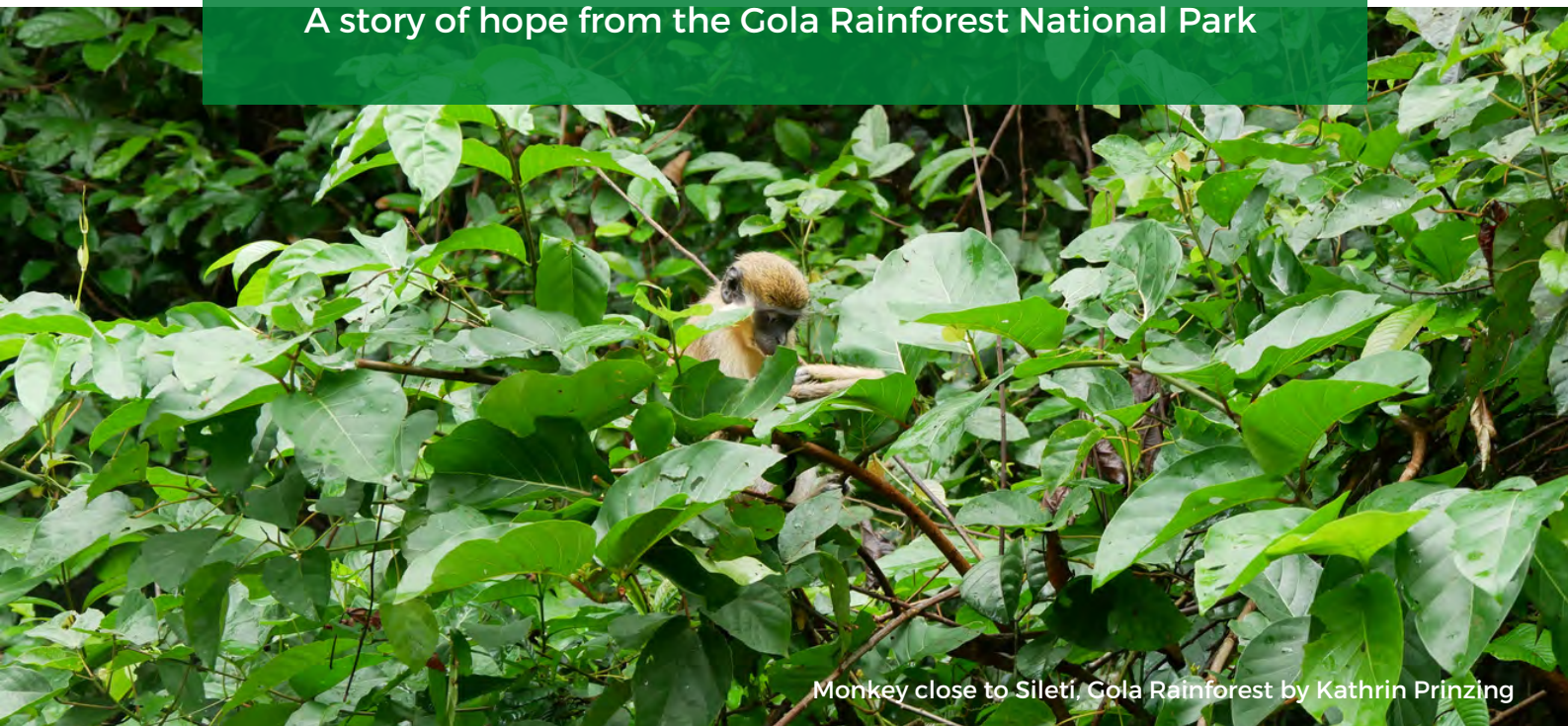


**Western Area Peninsula Forest**  
Our green lung and water  
catchment under threat



# A Lead Poacher becomes a Forest Conservationist in Joru-Gaura

A story of hope from the Gola Rainforest National Park



Monkey close to Sileti, Gola Rainforest by Kathrin Prinzing

Abdul Borbor Musa is a 45-year-old farmer and lives in Joru community in Gaura chiefdom, Kenema district, eastern Sierra Leone. For a long time, Abdul was involved in logging and slash-and-burn farming in the “Gaya-yei” (the crying hills) community forest in Joru.

These were key activities that he heavily depended on as livelihood options for the daily survival of his family. Further, Abdul was the leader of a group of five hunters in his community. Within a month’s period, Abdul and his team used to kill up to 12 different animals including monkeys, duikers, among others, which when sold, gave them a total of SLE 1,800,000 (\$75USD) that was shared among themselves. This was before the EU funded PAPFor project was launched in the community by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) in 2020.

The PAPFor project aimed at tackling the problems of forest degradation by working with rural communities to create awareness about the importance of protecting the forest while at the same time promoting alternative livelihood activities.

As key element of the PAPFor project was sustained sensitization activities through community engagement sessions across the chiefdom, prevailing on people like Musa and his cohorts to desist from practicing unsustainable farming, poaching and

logging in the community forest, the messages convinced the local authorities in Gaura chiefdom, and led them into galvanizing support from all the communities that have ownership of the forest to work collaboratively with the PAPFor project.

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*“We realised that the numbers of animals had begun dwindling in the forest, and their source of drinking water was gradually drying up due to the community farming practices.”*



Abdul Borbor Musa  
Farmer

This was followed by several engagements that culminated into the development and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2021 between CSSL and the chieftom authorities for the formal establishment of the Gaya-yei Community Forest. This was backed by a set of community by-laws with stringent penalties developed by the communities prohibiting destructive practices in the community forest. This was a move embraced by community stakeholders as moving forward within the context of community forestry, they see themselves playing a central role in decision-making for land-use and management of their local forest, as well as facilitating support from government and development partners.



*“We are particularly happy that the communities were willing and ready to embrace the concept of community forestry to protect their forest. We will continue to encourage them to work harder such that their forest becomes an envy for other communities to emulate.”*



*Emurana Sowa*  
Project National Coordinator, CSSL-PAPFor

“Like many of my colleague poachers, loggers and farmers, the PAPFor project really helped to redirect my focus into realizing the importance of saving our forest. It was initially very difficult for me to change my ways of doing things, especially poaching and upland farming which were my main sources of income”, Musa asserts.

Musa is now wholly dependent on agriculture; inland valley swamp farming and mono-cropping with three-month crop varieties including rice, potatoes, garden eggs, cassava and pepper.

“For every harvest I conduct, I always save some produce for food and for the next planting period, and then sell the rest. In my last harvest in the second half of 2023, I have so far made about SLE 7,000,000 (\$311.11). This is obviously a great turnaround for me and my family, thanks to CSSL and the PAPFor project.

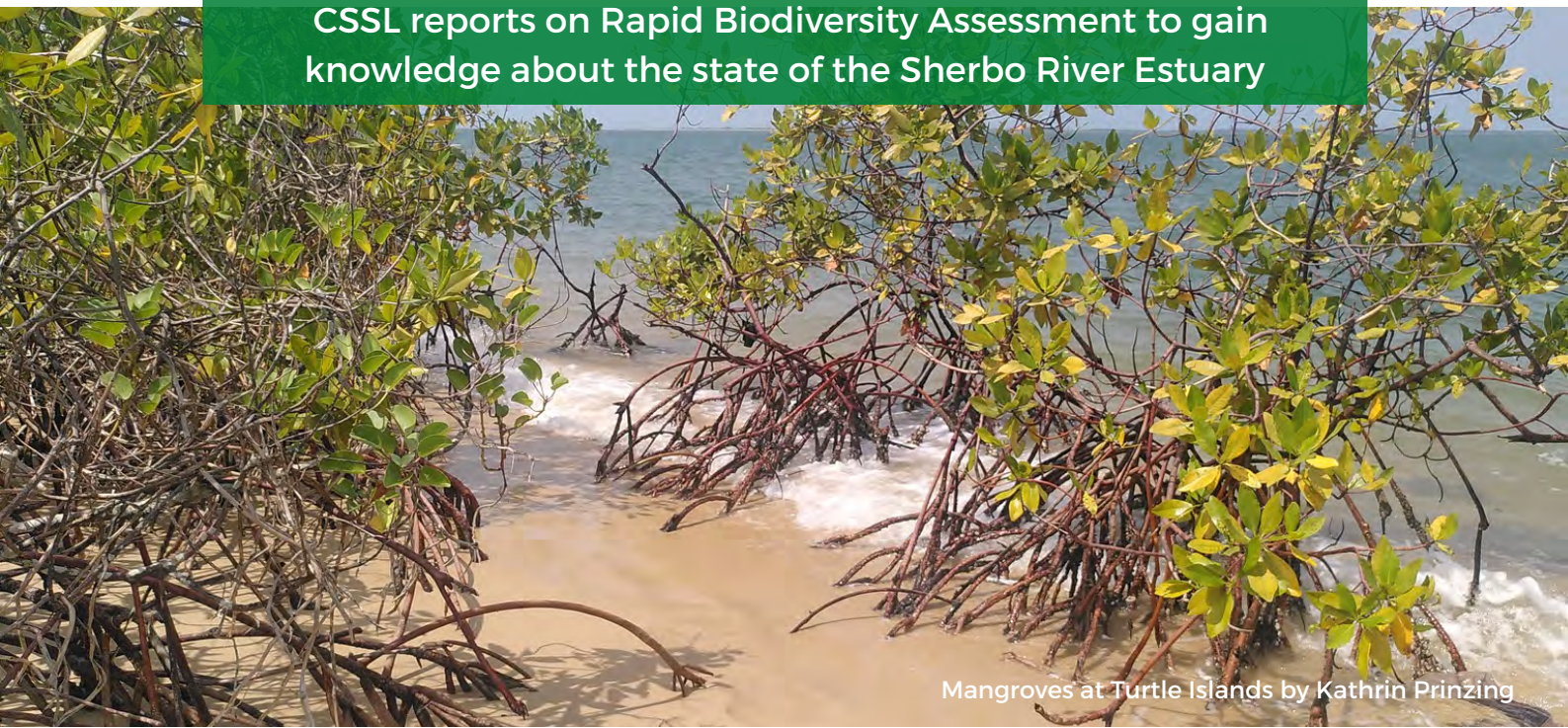
“As the current Chairman of our Forest Management Committee, I will continue to advocate for the protection of not only our forest, but also other community forests, as a healthy forest saves lives just like our Gaya-yei Community Forest”, Abdul notes. Since the formal establishment of the Gaya-yei Community Forest in 2021, Joru and five other communities have been enjoying uninterrupted water supply to these communities. Joru alone, has three schools and a Community Health Centre which have running pipe-borne water sourced from the Gaya-yei Community Forest through a gravity system. In addition, a pure water company that has provided employment to nearly 50 young people was also recently established by a resident of Joru.

*by Abdul K. Dumbuya*



# Biodiversity is a measure of ecosystem health

CSSL reports on Rapid Biodiversity Assessment to gain knowledge about the state of the Sherbo River Estuary



Mangroves at Turtle Islands by Kathrin Prinzing

Biodiversity is often used as a relative measure of ecosystem health. Usually high level of biodiversity is desirable and provides an indication of the relative good health status of the ecosystem concerned. Hence, maintaining biodiversity is necessary to assure the survival and productivity of ecosystems and livelihoods. To take the right decisions and develop the needed policies and actions, fact-based knowledge about the state of biodiversity of our Key Biodiversity Areas is crucial. Over the years, several studies in the SRE have been focused on flora assessment. However, there is a limited investigation that provides up-to-date information on the biodiversity status of the SRE. Therefore, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), with support from the African Conservation initiative (ACI) have conducted a Rapid Biodiversity Assessment (RBA) of the SRE including Turtle Islands to fill this gap by providing the needed and up-to-date information on the biodiversity status excluding flora of the SRE and Turtle Islands.

The West African Blue (WAB) locally known in Sierra Leone as the African Conservation Initiative (ACI) is a community-centric developer of blue carbon projects in West Africa. Its mission is to work closely with local communities to preserve, restore, and sustainably manage coastal ecosystems across West Africa, financed through the issuance of high-quality carbon credits. In the Sherbro River, ACI is currently developing a mangrove conservation and restoration project

which will seek certification through the Verra Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard (“CCB”).

**For a better understanding of the assessment, we interviewed Papanie Bai-Sesay, CSSL’s Senior Biodiversity Officer and Project Manager:**

**What is a Rapid Biodiversity Assessment and what is it’s goal, which animals could you observe?**

A Rapid Biodiversity Assessment (RBA) is a brief data collection process on wildlife with specific targets in a clearly defined area during a short period of time. The goal of our RBA was to establish baseline data on threatened species in the Sherbro and Turtle Island for the ACI project.

We managed to observe the following species: West African Dwarf Crocodile, Sooty Mangabey, Lesser Spot-noise Monkey, Parrot, Wholly-necked Stock, and what made us all very happy; all five threatened Turtle species.

The data collected in this project will be used to inform decision makers on the values of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) and how to manage it.

**Where was the Rapid Biodiversity Assessment realized?**

The RBA was conducted in the Sherbro River Estuary which is one of the MPAs in Sierra Leone with numerous islands, beautiful beaches and mudflats which are habitats to a lot of unique species and endangered wildlife.

**Which methods were used and which were the most interesting findings?**

The survey used transect walks, camera traps and local ecological knowledge survey to collect data on the presence and distribution of species. Interesting findings from the survey include the record of the following species of conservation importance: lesser spotted-nosed monkey, Sooty Mangabey, Wholly-necked stork, Green monkey, Timneh parrot, the five threatened Turtle species, Campbell's monkey.

**What was - for you personally - the most impressive moment of the trip?**

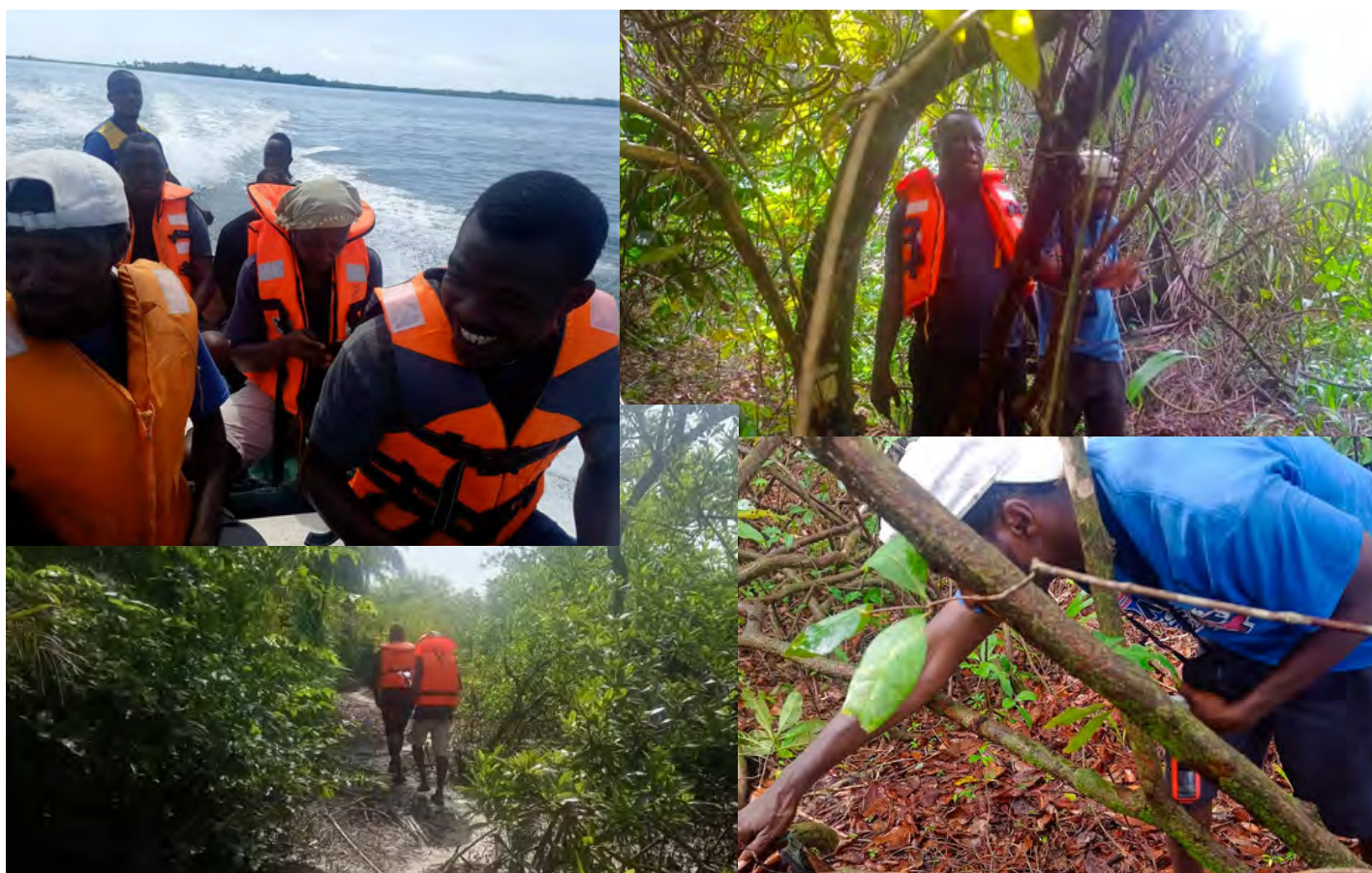
For me, the transect walk in Dema was really impressive - in a negative way. It was completely empty of wildlife. I haven't experienced something like that before. Another really new and worrying finding is that, many domestic dogs turned into wild dogs which is a completely new and unknown threat to the wildlife of this area.



*Papanie Bai-Sesay  
Senior Biodiversity and Project Manager, CSSL*

As mentioned above, this RBA is only the first step to develop a biodiversity monitoring plan for the site including recommendations for wildlife protection and biodiversity conservation. The team who went on the assessment is sure about the urgent need to conserve this unique nature for the future.

*by Kathrin Prinzing*



# Protection of the Common Good Saves the “Crying Hills” of Gaura in Kenema

A success story from the Kambui Hills



Katta Sannoh in her farm by Abdul K. Dumbuya

Madam Katta Sannoh is a 58-year-old woman and a peasant farmer who lives in Joru community, Gaura chiefdom in Kenema district, east of Sierra Leone.

“Sometimes when we had a good catch, our traps would kill up to 10 different species of bush meat, which we usually sell to take care of our family including the children’s school affairs”, Madam Katta explains.

In 2020, when the EU funded PAPFor project was introduced to Gaura chiefdom by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Madam Katta Sannoh was among the many participants that were invited to one of the project’s first meetings at Joru. Madam Sannoh is the current Chairlady of the Gola Community Development Committee (GCDC) – a structure that was constituted by Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee (GRC-LG) in all the forest edge communities in the Gola Landscape for members to represent their respective communities in discussions and arrangements related to community development and forest conservation.

The PAPFor project is an EU funded community forestry initiative aimed at tackling the problems of forest degradation through working with rural communities to create awareness on the importance of protecting the forest while at the same time promoting alternative livelihood options.

During the engagement, she acknowledged to have been touched by the messages given to them by the project staff about keeping their forest protected from all kinds of degrading practices. “I was the first person to openly talk to my husband for us to stop setting traps and farming in the Gaya-yayei forest. We gave our forest the name, “Gaya-yayei” to mean, “the Crying Hill” because, there was always enough water for all the communities around to sustain from. But at that meeting, we realised we were responsible for the acute water shortage that we were experiencing even in the rainy season. Since then, my husband stopped his trap work, and I relocated my farming activities to another area close to the community”, Madam Sannoh recounts.

To address the perennial problems of knowledge gap and deforestation, CSSL embarked on sustained community engagements as well as radio programs hosted on community radios, and also trained community and traditional leaders who successfully rallied local people around the idea of preserving the future of their unborn generations by conserving the forest.

In collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and GRC - LG, the project successfully developed and implemented key activities that accomplished the establishment and operationalization of seven (7) Community Forests and Land Use Planning and Mapping of the entire GRNP landscape.

The Gaya-yei Community Forest is a perfect example of forests that communities should rely on for provision of ecosystem services. In addition to non-timber forest products including herbal medicines, rattan and many others, the township of Joru and five other communities currently benefit from uninterrupted pipe-borne water sourced from the Gaya-yei Community Forest through a gravity system. Since its inception, the project has had a significant impact on about 34,704 local people across the six communities around the community forest in Gaura chiefdom.

“In addition to the provision of sustainable ecosystem services, CSSL also considers encouraging communities to preserve their community forests as a strategic way to mitigate climate change related crises. Surely, it is a smart move to help Sierra Leone adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change,” says Edward Momodu Sesay, Head of Programmes at CSSL.

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“My decision to do my farming activities elsewhere rather than in the forest was not because I now receive more post-harvest profit than in the past. That is far from it; in fact, I used to have bumper harvests from the forest in the tune of not less than One Million Old Leones (SLE 1,000,000) (\$47 USD) from the produce that I always sell. For now, the highest I have ever received is Five Hundred Thousand Old Leones (SLE 500,000) (\$23.5 USD) which is not sufficient to take care of my family. But I am motivated by the fact that, my decision is for the general good, and not just for me and my family.”



Katta Sannoh  
Farmer

by Abdul K. Dumbuya



# Another conference with nothing more than talking or the start of real action?

A comment from COP28



# COP28 UAE

From 30th November to 13th December 2023, the COP28 UN Climate Change Conference was celebrated as the biggest of its kind. Some 85,000 participants, including more than 150 Heads of State and Government, were among the representatives of national delegations, civil society, business, Indigenous Peoples, youth, philanthropy, and international organizations in Dubai.

COP28 began with a historic agreement on a loss and damage fund to help developing countries cope with the effects of climate change. The fund was agreed to by delegates on the first day of the conference. Several countries have pledged money to the fund, including the United Arab Emirates, Germany, and the United States. The fund is a significant step forward in addressing the issue of loss and damage, but it is important to remember that it is just one part of the solution.

The conclusion of the first global stocktake marked the world's efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. Analysis have shown that, across all areas of climate action the progress was too slow. Starting with reducing greenhouse gas emissions, over strengthening resilience to a changing climate, to getting the financial and technological support to vulnerable nations. To be able to reach the global climate goals by 2030, country representatives decided on several strategies. These include a call on governments to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels to renewables such as wind and solar power in their next round of climate commitments.

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*“I welcome the agreement on the Loss and Damage Fund, and the amounts of funds which have already been pledged for the fund from several countries. But let’s not forget that climate change is not only to solve on international level. Sierra Leone has signed the declarations on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action among others. It is now on our government and on us to realize these commitments in our own country. This starts with real action and enforcement of our environmental laws, of the protection of our protected areas such as the Western Area Peninsula Forest or Lake Sonfon. We can witness the destruction of our ecosystem day by day. If we really want to reduce food loss, ecosystem loss and degradation, we must start to protect our ecosystem. Protection is always better than restoration!”*



Sheku Kamara, PhD  
Executive Director, CSSL

# News from the CSSL office for our members and friends

New elected board - Environmental Education Materials and CSSL image brochure



Board members CSSL by Alhaji O.Kamara

## New CSSL elected Board

On 11th November 2023, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone invited all members to the Annual General Meeting. After statements from the Executive Director, an overview from the Auditor on the state of the finances of the organisation, and general information and discussions on CSSL’s work and achievements during the previous months followed. Due diligence was followed by the representative of SLANGO, Edward Yokie, who oversaw the board election process, and then climaxed the meeting with the announcement of the names of the new board members of CSSL.

**Congratulations to all old and new board members!**

## Environmental Education material on our website

To make it easier for our supporters, friends and School Nature Clubs to get our environmental education materials, we provide them now on our website.

Visit us online to download our materials: <https://cs-sl.org/ee-materials/>



## CSSL image brochure available now

Our new image brochure is online. It gives a short introduction in our history, our mission, vision and our work.

<https://cs-sl.org/pdf-cssl-image-brochure/>







CSSL  
THANKS ALL  
MEMBERS  
AND  
PARTNERS!

by canva



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