

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone



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From the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) wishes to share with its members, friends, supporters and the wider public key engagements and activities implemented in the last four months and some immediate outcomes. As the challenges persist, we mutate our strategies and ramp up our efforts to deal with them. The symbiotic relationship that has existed between man and the environment seems to be transforming itself into a mutually destructive one when man became rather parasitic on the environment. CSSL works with nature and people to create mutual benefits. Therefore, we are now largely focusing on community-based approaches to conservation. We also engage proactively on emerging and imminent issues relating to oil and gas exploration, raising awareness on the potential to boost the economy but also damage to the environment if the right approaches are not employed.

We're also reflecting on and reviewing our policies in order to strengthen governance of the organization and enhance institutional growth. We hope to be able to inspire our readership to do well for the environment and to appreciate CSSL's commitment in making its contribution towards this goal. Hence our slogan, 'We for nature, Nature for us'.

We wish you a happy reading and please feel free to share widely.

Dr. Sheku Kamara

Nature for us. We for nature.

Officials from Bread for the World (BftW) Visit Lake Sonfon in Diang Chiefdom, Koinadugu District



A post-engagement group photo of BftW & CSSL officials in the midst of community people at Yarrah-Gbenikoro

On the 8th November 2019, the Koinadugu district based field staff of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and two officials from Bread for the World (BftW) in Germany, Mr. Lars Meissner, Project Officer – Personnel Services and Madam Nadya Doglo, West and Central Africa Director, visited some communities in Diang chiefdom, Koinadugu district where CSSL has been implementing a project titled; “Community Empowerment for Sustainable Forests and Wetlands Management” over the last three years. The visit was meant for the donor partners to see how far the organization has gone with livelihood activities delivered by the project to communities around Lake Sonfon. These efforts are part of series of interventions gearing towards the protection of the lake from mining and other illegal activities that will result to environmental degradation and a drastic reduction in biodiversity presence in and around the lake.

The team first visited the Paramount Chief (PC) of Diang chiefdom, PC Sheku Magba Koroma III at the chiefdom’s headquarter town, Kondembaia. The PC thanked BftW for their support to his chiefdom particularly communities around Lake Sonfon through CSSL. He encouraged them to continue with such support so that CSSL and the target communities would do more to protect the lake. One of the Chairmen of the Community Management Associations (CMAs), Mr. Osman Yonkon Koroma also expressed similar sentiments and emphasized on the benefits the associations have so far derived from the project. He indicated the renewed interest of the people of Kondembaia towards the project, particularly so when the chiefdom headquarter town was now part of the target communities. Mr. Koroma noted the huge relevance that the agriculture component of the livelihood package has towards the improvement of their socio-economic lives, and urged

CSSL to lay more emphasis on bee keeping and honey production among other things.

At Yarrah-Gbenikoro (a joint community comprising of Yarrah and Gbenikoro), the BftW officials were welcomed with traditional songs and performances to show their appreciation for the support provided to their communities. The Project Manager, Mr. Papanie Bai Sesay introduced the visiting team to the communities and CMA membership, and outlined some key successes that the project has bagged so far. He underscored that, before the project, there was indiscriminate hunting and artisanal mining by communities around the lake. That he said, was negatively impacting on the survival of biomes in and around the lake. “As a result of our interventions, they have now abandoned these activities, and are now active members of the CMAs who are providing security for the lake”, Mr. Sesay noted. He continued that CSSL’s intervention through BftW was gradually changing the narrative regarding perceptions of communities relative to their reliance on the lake for their livelihood. He added that, these gains were also gradually improving the state of the lake.

The Section Chief of Mandrifeh section, Chief Alusine Tholley remarked that, they were happy to have the visiting team in their midst. He maintained that before the inception of the project, they used to mine and hunt in and around the lake. “But through the intervention of CSSL, we have now learnt that the lake contains rich biodiversity and we must do everything possible to protect it for not just ourselves, but for generations to come”, Chief Tholley emphasized. He pleaded with everyone in the community to continue supporting CSSL and partners in protecting the lake as it has great value to the communities, chiefdom and the country generally.

The team further visited the lake to have a feel of what it looks like before meeting with another set of CMA members and other community people at a community called Bode Ose (meaning, Board House) situated near the lake. Here, they were taken around to see where the project bee hives were positioned.

At the end of the visit, the officials from BftW expressed profound gratitude and appreciation to CSSL for according them the opportunity to meet with some of the communities they provided support for.

Text:
Alhaji/CSSL & A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL
Photo: Alhaji/CSSL

CSSL Organizes a Field Trip to the Gola Rainforest National Park

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), with funds from the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABICC) project, organized a two-day field trip to the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) from 11th to 12th February, 2020. The objective of the activity was to increase awareness among relevant stakeholders about the activities of the Gola WA BiCC project, while showcasing the importance of GRNP in eco-tourism development in Sierra Leone.

One of the key components of the Gola-WA BiCC project is to raise awareness among the public on the importance of wildlife conservation, community forest management and the values attached to the Gola landscape. This activity was attended by designated staff of CSSL, Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee (GRC-LG), representatives from relevant government agencies, CSSL Board of Trustees, environmental NGOs and school nature clubs (SNCs).

At Lalehun, where one of the eco-logdes in the GRNP is situated, the visiting team had a brief meeting with community stakeholders at the eco- lodge. The project's Learning Coordinator attached to CSSL, Mr Abdulai Dauda explained to participants about the purpose of the field trip and its relevance to the team, particularly the school children. Mr Dauda emphasized that pupils are agents of change and therefore, should be used as ambassadors to effect the desired change in the environment. Madam Hawa Tucker, Eastern Region Representative, CSSL Board of Trustees, also encouraged the pupils to be very attentive and learn new things relating to the environment. She continued that, whatever information generated from the trip should be cascaded to others in society. Madam Tucker also expressed her deepest appreciation to the entire staff of both CSSL and GRC-LG for the effort employed in making sure that the



Participants during the field trip in the National Park @ Lalehun

National Park is protected.

Mr Ekundayoh Nicole, Southern Region Representative, CSSL Board of Trustees, reiterated the commitment of the organization in improving conservation and protection of wildlife in Sierra Leone. He also placed premium on transforming the pupils into environmental conservation agents to enable them influence their relatives and friends”.

Rachael N. Williams, a pupil of the St. Joseph Secondary School, Freetown said, “... *I want to encourage all to treat the issue of conservation with all level of seriousness. I would like CSSL and GRC-LG to continue using school nature clubs in most of the activities they do, so that we the pupils will become more awfaiit with conservation issues.*”

The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, National Protected Area Authority, Mr. Samuel Ibrahim Kobba, stated that there are 17 protected areas in the country among which 15 are core protected including the GRNP.

But as a government, they cannot be everywhere at the same time to protect the reserves. In light of that, he continued, “*we always partner and work with other institutions to complement the little efforts applied by the government to maximize the required protection needed for the reserves, and the WA BiCC project is one of such endeavours.*”

The Environmental Education Officer of CSSL, Madam Mariama Kargbo, took participants through the do's and don't's of forest walk, and encouraged all to strictly follow the registered guides. They were also orientated on the use of bird watching equipment by Mr. Dauda.

Participants were later provided with binoculars and led into the forest to have a feel of that area of the Park, while also guided to observe key plant and animal species including birds. At the end of the hike, participants outlined various observations made including a specific animal track that was later identified as a track of a Maxwell Duiker. Bird species like the Green Pigeon, Palm-nut Vulture, Greentail Bristlebill, Yellow Cast Wattle Hornbill among others were also sighted.

CSSL Sounds Stakeholder Opinions over ongoing Community Forestry Management Project in Kambui Hills South Reserves

With support from the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is in the process of completing the implementation of various activities of a project titled, Community-based Forestry Management in the Kambui Hills South Forest Reserve in Kenema district, “Putting Theory into Practice”. On January 17, 2020, the project team held a consultative meeting with key stakeholders at the organization’s district office in Kenema to provide stakeholders with key updates on the status of the project, especially the just completed livelihoods component and community forest (CF) boundary demarcation and the plan to establish CFs in two chiefdoms, among other things.

Mr. Mohamed O’Level Sesay, Kenema District Council Chairman who chaired the meeting entreated participants from all four chiefdoms (Small Bo, Nongowa, Koya and Niawa chiefdoms) to provide updates by highlighting key successes and challenges or burning issues relative to the implementation of the project.

Addressing participants, the Project Manager, Mr. George Ganda noted that a core value of CSSL in project implementation is working collaboratively with communities to come up with desirable decisions to address specifically targeted environmental issues. He continued that, the project started in June 2017 and would end in May 2020. He added that the alternative livelihoods was ongoing with some challenges though relating to internal feud among community members in Small Bo and Koya chiefdoms. This, he said, was affecting the progress of this component in the said chiefdoms. Mr. Ganda added that, the livelihood activities were endorsed for implementation by communities after several consultative meetings. He reiterated the need for all stakeholders to continue providing the required support towards achieving the overall objective of the project, which is the establishment of community forests in at least two chiefdoms. Two chiefdoms

because time would not permit them to cover all four chiefdoms, Mr. Ganda disclosed. The Project Manager also talked about plans that have been laid down to undertake a biodiversity assessment survey to determine the level of biodiversity presence in the forests of the respective chiefdoms, and then conduct a CF boundary demarcation, produce maps of all the targeted chiefdoms and then pave the way for the establishment of CFs in the aforementioned chiefdoms before the project ends. He continued that they also had plans to develop a CF management plan and update existing CF bylaws by including a chapter dealing with environmental conservation issues.

The Assistant Project Manager, Mr. Aruan Koroma also briefly explained about the specific areas where the project has established demonstration sites for the livelihood activities. The sites included, Njala (Small Bo chiefdom), Kambuwabu (Nongowa Chiefdom), Matakahun (Niawa Chiefdom), and Jui, Serabu, Menima (Koya Chiefdom) with inland valley swamp rice, groundnut and potato vines cultivation and animal husbandry being undertaken as selected by communities, Mr. Koroma revealed.

Various key stakeholders responded to the presentations of the project staff by expressing their appreciation to CSSL and Jensen for the livelihood support provided to their respective communities. A representative from the Niawa Chiefdom Organizing Committee, who doubled as the town chief of Matakahun, Mr. Mustapha Koroma said, they were highly pleased with the efforts of CSSL towards making the forest edge communities realize their dream of having alternative livelihoods of their choice. *“Initially, I was reluctant to accept this project in my community, but because of the continuous engagements and consultations from the CSSL field staff, I had to fully involve in the*

activities. I can now proudly say that my community is benefiting a lot from our inland valley swamp rice cultivation... thanks to Jensen for the support.”

He pleaded with the project team to think of a way that more communities would have more alternative livelihoods support, should additional livelihood activities be provided in the near future. Other community authorities also reaffirmed their commitment to support the project to establish community based forests in their respective chiefdoms. They indicated their resolve to identify possible areas of community forest within their chiefdoms. The key stakeholders however, recommended that the project team continue to involve the appropriate local authorities in all aspects of the project interventions to ensure the sustainability of the gains already made by the project. A communique was suggested to be developed and signed by all stakeholders to affirm their continued support to the establishment of CFs in the project targeted chiefdoms.



Mr. Ibrahim Tiah, Chairman, Community-based Forestry Management Organizing Committee, Small Bo Chiefdom making a statement

Text: A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL & Aruna/CSSL

Photo: Aruna/CSSL

Communities Embrace Community Forestry Management in Malema Chiefdom, Kailahun District

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is currently implementing a project under the REDD+, with funds from the Darwin Initiative to protect the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP). This is done by providing support to forest-edge communities to sustainably increase crop yield and keeping annual deforestation of their community forests to less than 2.5%. The aim of the project is to identify the most important community forest (CF) for biodiversity, and empower communities to protect it through tailored trainings to increase food security, linking it with zero-deforestation in high conservation value (HCV) areas.

In order to bring the communities up to speed with the realities of the project and also ensure the commitment of community members who live around 14 forest edge communities to support in forest management through forest monitoring, CSSL, in collaboration with Gola Rainforest Company Limited by Guarantee (GRC LG), organised a community engagement and sensitization campaign.

The first engagement and sensitization meeting was held in Makpoima community on February 12, 2020 with over 100 community people from various neighbouring communities in attendance. The objective was to adequately sensitize the people about community forestry and food security, and to resolve the deep rooted issues that had existed between the community stakeholders and GRC LG Research Technicians.

The Research and Monitoring Technical Adviser for GRC LG, Alessandro Albani thanked the chief and other community people for the warm welcome they accorded them, and noted that, he was quite aware that other projects were going on in Makpoima and other forest edge communities even before the inception of the Darwin project, but maintained that their visit to the community was purposely for the Darwin project. He continued that, information received from the community indicated that his initial visit and explanation provided about the Darwin project was not well understood by the people, and expressed hope that the people would understand every detail about the project at that particular time. Alex emphasized the need for the existence of

better cooperation and sustained partnership between GRC and the communities if the project should be beneficial to the people. He explained clearly the focus of the Darwin project, and called for mutual understanding between the two parties.

The town chief of Makpoima, Mr. Musa Koroma remarked that both the CA and National Park are being managed by GRC and the community people, so resisting the activities of GRC will be counter-productive for even the communities. He continued that, “... *the only issue we have is that, there are laws in every community that must be respected by anybody who wants to work with us*”. He added that, they always provide community guides to support research technicians in their research work which suggests that they are ready to work with GRC, but their community laws must be maintained. At the end of the discussions, the town chief of Makpoima and other communities registered their commitment to accept and support all activities related to the Darwin project, including the deployment of camera traps in their forest.

The sensitization team continued with the tour to the remaining six communities which included Dukor, Seiyama, Yolor, Congo, Levuma and

Madina in Malema chiefdom, Kailahun district.

This was the first phase of a total of 14 forest edge communities targeted to be reached with key messages about the importance of forest (biodiversity), ownership of forests, livelihood activities and the negative impacts of illegal activities on the forests.

At the end of the presentation in every community, participants exhibited great joy and appreciation to CSSL and GRC LG for the education they had received. From the feedback received, key stakeholders and other community members from different communities hoped they had had this sensitization earlier, but still expected that the little community forest left with them would be protected through the knowledge CSSL and GRC had provided them.

They asked various questions that they claimed were pertinent to them. Such questions included among others the fate of their community forest should there be a possible expansion of the National Park, relevance of camera trapping, the key reasons for targeting their chiefdom, Malema and possible mining within the community forest during the project period. These were well answered by the team.



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

Photo: Mariama / CSSL

GRC's Alessandro & Chief Koroma of Makpoima community exchanging a handshake after the meeting @ the community barray

Spring Alive Supports New School Nature Clubs in Western Area Rural Sierra Leone



The newly established SNC members @ the launch in Waterloo, outside Freetown.

In an effort to promote school pupils to increase their knowledge and bring them closer to nature, CSSL has been working to establish School Nature Clubs (SNCs) in many schools in the Western Area and the provinces for the past three decades.

With support from Heidelberg Cement through the Spring Alive Program, CSSL recently facilitated the establishment and strengthening of five SNCs in five schools in the Western Area Rural district to support the pupils and school communities with increased environmental awareness. SNCs particularly provide exciting opportunities for children to explore their connection with the environment in a peer-oriented setting, giving them a sense of ownership and stewardship.

Following CSSL's receipt of funds from the Spring Alive Program in August 2019 for the implementation of the aforementioned project, the organization commenced preliminary activities including identification of schools, notification of school authorities and garnering support from all through follow up visits for the establishment of nature clubs. The team identified Huntingdon Junior Secondary School, Peninsular Junior Secondary School, Ansarul Junior Secondary School, Russell Technical Secondary School and Kwama Junior Secondary School in Jui, Waterloo, Rokel, Russel and Kwama communities respectively, and solicited their cooperation for the activity.

For each of the above schools, one Teacher Coordinator and ten pupils were selected by their respective school authorities to constitute the clubs. This was followed by some orientation sessions led by the CSSL Environmental Education Officer, Mrs. Mariama Kargbo and Abdul K. Dumbuya, CSSL Communications Officer and Spring Alive Campaign Coordinator, Sierra Leone on the relevance and basic operations of SNCs. They were also made to understand that due to budgetary limitations, five pupils out of the selected ten would be required to witness the launch. These sessions were followed by the design and production of sensitization materials in the form of stickers and posters. Key messages with images of the birds promoted by the Spring Alive Campaign were inscribed on these materials, which were made ready for distribution during the launch.

On the 10th December 2019, CSSL organized a grand launch for the 5 newly established SNCs at the ChildCare Organization Conference Center in the Western Area Rural district headquarter town of Waterloo. The event was witnessed by about 50 participants drawn from the Ministry of Senior and Basic Education, officials from the Western Area Rural District Council, the participating school communities, members of the SNCs and the leadership of CSSL among others.

During the launch, various speakers including the Principals of the participating schools thanked the donors for providing such support to their schools. They also thanked CSSL for selecting their respective schools for the establishment of the SNCs. According to the Principal of Ansarul Junior Secondary School, Mr. Umar Dumbuya, this would trigger interest among children for birds and the protection of their habitats. He added that, *"I want to encourage CSSL and partners to establish such clubs in other schools across the district because this is a laudable venture. I want to also appeal to the management of CSSL to help build my staff's capacity on environmental issues in order to ensure the viability of the just established SNCs."* Similar sentiments were also expressed by other speakers.

In his address before officially launching the SNCs, the Executive Director of CSSL, Dr. Sheku Kamara thanked the heads of schools and particularly the Teacher Coordinators for supporting CSSL in making the entire process a success. He emphasized the difficulty involved in organizing children to get them to understand and grow interest in environmental issues. He noted that, man's actions have been the causes

Spring Alive Supports New School Nature Clubs in Western Area Rural Sierra Leone Contd.

of the environmental disasters the world is suffering from on a daily basis. Dr. Kamara encouraged all present to pay keen attention towards saving migratory and all other rare birds from being extinct. According him, they are also an integral part of the ecosystems, and must be protected like every other protected animals. He further profoundly thanked the Heidelberg Cement Group for providing the financial support for this activity. He said the new SNCs were now the newest members in the CSSL family, and would be treated as such. He added that, the first major activity the society would involve them in would be a field trip to the Western Area Peninsular Forest to accord them the opportunity of a firsthand experience in the wild, and for them to see how important it is to conserve and protect nature. After this address, he then officially launched the SNCs.

Text: A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL
Photo: Mariama/CSSL

New Changes in Bird Migration

A growing body of research shows that birds' spring migration has been getting earlier and earlier in recent decades. New research from *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* on Black-throated Blue Warblers, a common songbird that migrates from Canada and the eastern U.S. to Central America and back every year, uses fifty years of bird-banding data to add another piece to the puzzle, showing that little-studied fall migration patterns have been shifting over time as well.

Loyola Marymount University's Kristen Covino and her colleagues used data housed at the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory on migrating Black-throated Blue Warblers between 1965 and 2015. Across the United States, researchers working with this program safely capture migrating birds, collect data on them, and fit

them with metal leg bands with unique codes that allow them to be identified if they're captured again. Analyzing almost 150,000 individual records, Covino and her colleagues found that the timing of the birds' spring migration has advanced over the last fifty years, with early migrants passing through banding sites approximately one day earlier each decade. Crucially, their data also covered fall migration, which has been less well-studied, and found that while the timing of the peak of fall migration hasn't changed, fall migration takes longer today than it did fifty years ago.

The North American Bird Banding Program is one of the most expansive historical datasets on migratory birds, including records for over 38 million songbirds banded since 1960. "My coauthor Sara Morris and I were already working together on another paper on Blackpoll Warblers using data we'd requested from banding stations across North America. We wanted to take a similar large-scale approach for this study, but we wanted to demonstrate that we could do this approach with data that is completely available from the Bird Banding Lab," says Covino. "We selected Black-throated Blue Warblers because it's relatively straightforward to determine their age and sex, which means that the data this species generates are both accurate and powerful."

Although the researchers emphasize that their findings can't be explicitly linked to climate change without incorporating climate or environmental data, they believe similar methods could be useful for tracking the effects of climate change on birds. "The protraction of fall migration means that the season is getting longer overall, but it could also mean that the breeding season may be shifting, ending earlier for some individuals but later for others. To determine what this means in the context of breeding season shifts in timing, additional studies that incorporate both arrival on the breeding grounds and, importantly, departure from them are needed," says Covino. "More studies of these patterns of fall migration timing and, even more so, both spring and fall migration timing across years are needed to gain the complete picture of how species are changing migration timing."

Story Source:
American Ornithological Society Publications Office.



CSSL Facilitates Policy Dialogue Forum for Key Stakeholders on Oil & Gas Exploration in Sierra Leone

On the 29th November, 2019, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) organized a policy dialogue forum for key stakeholders to examine and discuss the Petroleum Policy for Sierra Leone, with specific focus on Health, Safety, Environment and Social Impact. The event was geared towards further supporting the government of Sierra Leone in strengthening the relevant structures to ensure environmental safety even before the commencement of full scale oil exploitation and production work. The well attended event took place at the Hill Valley Hotel in Freetown, bringing together participants from relevant government institutions, civil society organizations, local councils, the media, private sector, including oil dealers among others.

Mr. Charles Showers, President, CSSL, welcomed all present and thanked them for attending the meeting. He intimated that oil and gas are very important and valuable resources, and observed that extracting them will lead to environmental ramifications. He disclosed that the meeting was scheduled because they wished to ensure that when the drilling starts, there will be policies in place to guide the process so that Sierra Leoneans benefit from the oil without becoming victims of oil or gas explosion and other adverse effects of oil exploitation. He drew the curtain down on his address by calling on all to participate actively and have fruitful discussions.

Dr. Sheku Kamara, the Executive Director, CSSL, also welcomed the assembly and expressed his pleasure in seeing a vast spectrum of people willing to come together to take the process forward. He asserted that anything that impacts on our environment is important and worthy of consideration. Furthermore, he underpinned the importance of taking care of ourselves and our environment at the same time and added that, as environmental

NGOs, it is their duty to pay attention to this very important aspect. He reported that, they started with stakeholder mapping of the people involved in activities that are likely to impact the environment, and people who might want to report on it, including MDA's, civil society, etc. Dr. Kamara similarly disclosed that they have had a couple of meetings and have decided to form a coalition for oil and gas based on such engagements. He said, *"we have already formed the coalition called Coalition on Oil & Gas Pollution on the Environment in Sierra Leone (COGaPE-SL) and those who have not yet signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to do so before this meeting ends today"*. He observed that they (participants) were now at the critical point to address key issues and emphasized that they should be guided by the national laws and policies. He noted that they were there to look at the existing policies and how effective they (the policies) are in terms of conserving and protecting the environment. He asserted that the purpose of the policy dialogue was to save marine life even as they wished to have economic viability. He admonished all to learn from and not repeat the mistakes of countries like Nigeria and Ghana that are involved in oil exploitation. He ended by urging all to work for the good of the country.

Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya, the CSSL Communications Officer and Project Coordinator underpinned the importance of strengthened collaboration. He stated that COGaPE-SL is the right advocacy group set up to put things in order before the exploration starts. He registered the fact that they wanted everyone on board – those present, absent and even the people in the wetland communities.

Edward Sesay, Programme Manager, CSSL examined the Petroleum Policy for Sierra Leone and focused on the Health, Safety, Environment and Social Impact, that deals with specific key principles. During his presentation he emphasized that the petroleum sector

has risks that can have serious negative impacts and noted that, if there should be an oil spill or an off-shore explosion it would have a negative impact on man and the environment.

During the dialogue, the assembly agreed that exploration companies should embark on restoration of sites as soon as they start their exploration of oil. They also raised concern about which organisation would monitor the companies when exploration started.

Participants similarly acknowledged the fact that though the anticipated gas and oil industry would be economically viable, they equally realized that they should take urgent steps to save marine life and the environment, especially in the case of oil spills that have the potential to affect the lives of ordinary Sierra Leoneans.

Mr. Josephus Mammie, Deputy Director of Fisheries, stated that activities in the ocean will reflect adversely on the eco-system and asserted that as a ministry, their policies and legal instruments speak directly to mitigating the adverse effects of oil and gas exploration. He reported that there are fines/penalties for people who commit any infraction and underscored the point that at Fisheries, they continue to sensitize people about protecting the environment from pollution.

Mr. Victor Sawyerr from the Petroleum Regulatory Agency informed participants that the Petroleum Regulatory Agency is responsible for the refining of petroleum products and licensing the domestic operations. He intimated that they are in charge of the downstream operations but complained that people do programmes of this nature but hardly invite them. He advised that the first thing that should be done is the Strategic Environment Impact Assessment (SEIA) before moving to the project level. He told the meeting that there are many stages before they get to the project level.

CSSL Facilitates Policy Dialogue Forum for Key Stakeholders on Oil & Gas Exploration in Sierra Leone *Contd.*

Other participants from various institutions including Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Sierra Leone Maritime Administration, National Protected Areas Authority, Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry, Total Sierra Leone, National Petroleum, among others also expressed similar sentiments.

Furthermore, participants agreed to support the government in strengthening the existing weak policies, serve as a pressure group, raise the alarm when things are not working well and be guided by the policies.

At the end of the dialogue, participants provided an array of recommendations, which if considered, Sierra Leone could enjoy the benefits and forestall the negative impacts of oil and gas exploitation. Such recommendations included increased stakeholder collaboration, conduct of baseline and tar ball studies, joint site monitoring and policy strengthening and/or review of legal instruments. Some MDAs also requested a bit of time for them to revert to their superiors regarding the signing of the MoA.



Group photo of some oil & gas key stakeholders during the policy dialogue in Freetown

Text: Mrs. Elizabeth Kamara/ Lecturer, USL

Photo: Christopher/CSSL

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone Reviews Constitution & Operational Procedures after 33 Years

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone has been in existence for over thirty three years. Formed in 1986, it has been complementing the efforts of the Sierra Leone Government in the area of environmental conservation. Sierra Leone is endowed with Natural Resources including rainforests, mangroves, woodland savannas with wildlife in abundance.

The 1986 CSSL Constitution had loopholes that could be exploited in bad faith and it also needed upgrade to conform to very recent policies that CSSL had developed.

After several deliberations with the then Executive Board, led by lead consultant, Dr. Hazel Thompson, chaired by the President, Charles Showers, a final draft was endorsed by the Board of Trustees.

However, this needed ratification by the general membership, which was done at the organization's annual general meeting on the 8th of February 2020 in Freetown.

CSSL now has a brand new Constitution and Operational Procedures, and the future of this formidable organization in the area of the environment and biodiversity conservation is now much brighter.



Mr. Charles Showers, CSSL President addressing membership during the CSSL AGM at St. Anthony Parish Hall in Freetown

Text: Charles Showers, President of CSSL Board of Trustees

Photo: A. 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
- Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone
- Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry
- Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary
- Wetlands International
- Ministry of Lands...
- Family Kingdom, Freetown, Sierra Leone
- Hotel Africanus, Freetown, Sierra Leone



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