

# Newsletter 4 - 2025

## Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

*Connecting people to nature.*



*Photo by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya*

Dear Readers,

The final quarter of 2025 marked a defining moment for environmental action in Sierra Leone, underscoring the power of community leadership, sustained advocacy, and national commitment to conservation and climate resilience. From local awareness campaigns to global climate platforms, the work showcased this quarter reflects a growing movement where people, nature, and policy converge for lasting impact.

National recognition of the Conservation Society Sierra Leone (CSSL) as Best Environmental NGO of the Year by SLANGO stands as a testament to years of dedicated service, strong partnerships, and grassroots engagement. More than an award, this honour affirms the credibility of civil society organisations in shaping Sierra Leone's environmental future and delivering tangible results for communities and ecosystems alike.

At the community level, transformative change continues to take root. In Mambolo Chiefdom, long-standing myths surrounding owls are giving way to understanding and appreciation through targeted education, creativity, and dialogue.



Equally inspiring is the progress in mangrove restoration in Tissanah Community, Western Area Rural District. The successful restoration of 51 hectares of degraded mangroves, achieved through strong community ownership and inclusive participation—particularly by women—highlights what is possible when local people lead environmental solutions. With trained community-based monitors now safeguarding these ecosystems, mangrove restoration is not only rebuilding nature but also strengthening livelihoods, resilience, and local stewardship.

On the global stage, Sierra Leone's participation at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, reinforced the country's commitment to climate action driven by local realities. The launch of the Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3) and the strong representation of Gola community stakeholders showcased Sierra Leone as a leader in community-led conservation, inclusive governance, and REDD+ implementation.

Together, these stories paint a compelling picture of progress: conservation that is locally grounded, nationally supported, and globally relevant. As Sierra Leone moves forward, the lesson from this quarter is clear - when communities are empowered, traditions respected, and partnerships strengthened, environmental protection becomes not just possible, but sustainable.

Wishing you all a happy and conservation conscious 2026!

**Charles Showers**  
**CSSL Board President**



# CSSL RECEIVES RECOGNITION FROM SLANGO...

**... AS BEST ENVIRONMENTAL NNGO FOR 2025**



We are proud to inform our members, partners and supporters that we have been recognised as the Best Environmental NGO in Sierra Leone for 2025 by the Sierra Leone Association of Non-governmental Organizations (SLANGO). The event took place at a fundraising engagement on 10th October, 2025 at Brookfields Hotel in Freetown.

Receiving the award, the Executive Director of CSSL, Dr Sheku Kamara, thanked SLANGO for recognizing the work of CSSL. He noted that his organization will not take this award for granted, but will continue to work relentlessly for the good of the country.

We dedicate this award to our team, and esteemed donors, partners and members.

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# Transforming Perceptions: Owl Awareness-raising Activities in Mambolo, Kambia District



For generations, owls in many parts of Sierra Leone have been shrouded in myth, fear, and superstition. In Mambolo Chiefdom, located in Kambia District in the northern region of the country, these negative traditional beliefs have contributed to the persecution of owls and a general disregard for their ecological importance. Recognizing the need to reshape these perceptions, a dedicated awareness-raising campaign was conducted on October 14, 2025, targeting both schoolchildren and the wider community. The initiative sought to promote understanding, dispel harmful myths, and nurture a culture of conservation.

The school component of the campaign was held in the chiefdom's most populated educational institution, ensuring the participation of a wide cross-section of pupils and teachers. Central to the discussions were messages addressing the deep-rooted belief that owls are evil or harbingers of misfortune.

A highlight of the school program was a creative pupil-led drama titled "Changing Evil Perception on Owls." The performance captivated the audience while delivering a powerful narrative about replacing fear with knowledge. Through storytelling and role-play, students

demonstrated that owls are not only harmless but also vital members of the ecosystem, especially in controlling rodent populations.

To reinforce the campaign's key messages, informational posters were strategically distributed and displayed in prominent community locations – including the school grounds, the local health centre, the market, and other public spaces. These visually engaging materials served as constant reminders of the campaign's message, reaching individuals who did not participate directly in the activities.

Additionally, branded T-shirts carrying conservation messages were distributed to teachers and pupils, further extending the campaign's visibility across the community.

Recognizing the power of mass communication, the team hosted an interactive radio session on Radio Kollenten, the station with the widest listenership in Kambia District. The live programme invited community members to participate by sending text messages with questions or comments about owls and wildlife conservation.

The real-time interaction proved highly effective. Listeners expressed curiosity, challenged long-held

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# Transforming Perceptions: Owl Awareness-raising Activities in Mambolo, Kambia District. Contd.



beliefs, and sought clarification on issues surrounding owls. Every query received on-air responses, ensuring that accurate information reached thousands of households. Radio, as a trusted medium in rural communities, amplified the campaign's impact far beyond the immediate vicinity of Mambolo.

Through its multilayered strategy - school engagement, public posters, T-shirt distribution, and radio outreach - the awareness campaign successfully reached an estimated 8,000 people across Mambolo and the broader Kambia District.

Early feedback indicates a noticeable shift in public attitudes. Community members are beginning to appreciate the ecological role of owls, and schoolchildren who participated in the drama and discussions have become more confident advocates for wildlife conservation.

The owl awareness campaign in Mambolo represents a significant step toward transforming misconceptions and fostering environmental stewardship. By combining education, creativity, and mass communication, the initiative effectively challenged traditional beliefs and encouraged a more informed and positive perspective on owls.

Such campaigns demonstrate that meaningful conservation begins with awareness - and when communities are empowered with knowledge, long-standing myths can give way to understanding, respect, and sustainable coexistence with wildlife.



*By Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya & Foday Kamara*

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# Communities Lead the Way in Mangrove Restoration in Western Area Rural Sierra Leone



With support from the Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA) Grant, a remarkable milestone has been achieved in community-led environmental restoration in Tissanah Community, Western Area Rural District, Sierra Leone. A total of 51 hectares of degraded mangrove forest have been successfully restored, recording an impressive 90 percent survival rate of planted mangrove propagules.

The restoration initiative is being implemented by the Conservation Society Sierra Leone (CSSL) in partnership with GOAL-SL, as part of a broader effort to protect and restore critical coastal ecosystems across the Scarcies River and Western Area Rural landscapes.

Between the end of September and November 2025, community members worked hand-in-hand with the project team to collect and transplant wild mangrove propagules into highly degraded sites. During this initial phase, 51 hectares were restored out of a total of 250 hectares of degraded mangrove areas mapped for rehabilitation.

Mangroves play a vital role in protecting shorelines from erosion, supporting fisheries, storing carbon, and

sustaining biodiversity. However, these ecosystems continue to face serious threats from overharvesting, pollution, and encroachment.

Reflecting on the transformation, the Town Chief of Tissanah, Mr. Sallieu S.B. Kamara, noted that the community once believed the mangroves were lost forever. "... But today, visible new growth stands as proof that restoration is possible when we the community members take ownership", Chief S. B. Kamara expressed.

One of the key drivers behind the project's success is strong community participation and ownership. Local residents were fully involved in site selection, propagule collection, planting, and ongoing protection of the restored areas.

Women have also played a central role in the restoration process. According to Mrs. Fatmata Kamara, a women's group leader in Tissanah, the mangrove restoration represents hope for future generations. "We are not just planting mangroves; we are planting hope for our children as the mangroves help in protecting our homes and our livelihoods", said Mrs. Kamara.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the project has

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# Communities Lead the Way in Mangrove Restoration in Western Area Rural Sierra Leone.

## Contd.



recruited and trained 10 community-based mangrove monitors across the two project landscapes. These monitors were selected through a transparent, community-led process based on literacy, commitment to conservation, credibility, and willingness to serve both men and women equally.

The monitors are responsible for conducting regular patrols, monitoring restored sites, detecting and reporting illegal activities, and supporting community awareness and protection efforts. Their presence has strengthened local responsibility and pride in protecting the mangroves.

Project Manager, Bobson Kobba, emphasized that the initiative goes beyond tree planting. He highlighted that restoring 51 hectares with a high survival rate demonstrates what is achievable when communities lead conservation efforts. "By empowering local monitors, the project is ensuring that restored mangroves are protected for the long term", Bobson maintained.

Looking ahead, the project plans to scale up restoration activities as additional funding becomes available,

provide further training for community monitors, strengthen local by-laws, and expand community-led conservation efforts across the landscape.

As the newly planted mangroves continue to grow, so too does the hope that community-driven conservation will remain central to protecting Sierra Leone's vital coastal ecosystems and strengthening the resilience of coastal communities.

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*By Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya &  
Bobson Kobba*

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# Beautiful Birds of Sierra Leone

## HOOPOE *Upupa epops*



The Hoopoe is an exotic looking bird that is the size of a Mistle Thrush. It has a pinkish-brown body, striking black and white wings, a black downcurved bill, and a pinkish-brown crest which it raises when excited.

It does not breed in the UK, but as many as 100 Hoopoes can turn up in spring (mostly seen solo) as birds migrating north to Europe from Africa overshoot and land on the south coast of England.

Hoopoes are listed as a Schedule 1 species on The Wildlife and Countryside Act.

*By Charles Showers*

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# Gola Community Stakeholders Showcase Community-Led Climate Action at COP30 Belém, Brazil



Members of Gola Communities: Hon. Mohamed Kanneh of Malema Chiefdom and PC Saffa Tamu of Macpele Chiefdom discussing with Melanie Coath, RSPB Principal Policy Officer, in one of the sessions at COP 30, Belém, Brazil.

The 30<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP30) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Belém, Brazil, from 5 to 24 November 2025. The conference brought together global leaders, policymakers, development partners, civil society organisations, and community representatives to advance collective action on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance.

Sierra Leone participated with a high-level delegation led by the Hon. Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Mr. Emmanuel Jiwoh Abdulai. The delegation also included the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, and the Executive Chairman of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Dr. Abubakar Massaquoi. Sierra Leone's presence at COP30 underscored the country's growing commitment to climate-resilient development and global environmental stewardship.

The Sierra Leone Pavilion served as the focal point for national engagement throughout the conference.

It attracted delegates from other countries, representatives of bilateral and multilateral institutions, private sector actors, and international non-governmental organisations. At the official launch of the Pavilion on 12 November 2025, the Minister emphasised that Sierra Leone's participation at COP30 was not only about negotiating global climate action, but also about demonstrating the country's practical efforts to address climate change impacts through mitigation and adaptation initiatives that improve livelihoods and national well-being.

A key highlight at the Pavilion was the launch of Sierra Leone's Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3). The NDC 3 outlines innovative, cross-sectoral approaches to climate action developed through nationwide consultations and participatory planning processes. The launch was led by the EPA Executive Chairman, reflecting strong institutional leadership in advancing Sierra Leone's climate commitments.

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# Gola Community Stakeholders

## Showcase Community-Led Climate Action at COP30 Belém, Brazil. Contd



Members of Gola Communities: Hon. Mohamed Kanneh of Malema Chiefdom (left) and PC Saffa Tamu of Macpele Chiefdom (right)

### Strong Gola Landscape Representation at COP30

The Gola Landscape was prominently represented at COP30, showcasing community-driven conservation and climate solutions. Paramount Chief Saffa Tamu of Makpele Chiefdom represented the Gola Paramount Chiefs, while Hon. Mohammed Kanneh, Member of Parliament for Malema Chiefdom, represented parliamentary interests within the Gola Landscape. Mr Alade Adeleke, Country Programme Manager for Sierra Leone, represented the programme's international partner, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The delegation was supported by the Gola Rainforest Conservation Limited by Guarantee (GRC-LG).

On 13 November 2025, the Gola delegation delivered a comprehensive presentation on the Gola Rainforest National Park and the Gola REDD+ Programme at the Sierra Leone Pavilion. The session was attended by Gola stakeholders, delegates from Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, members of the Sierra Leone delegation from other ministries and agencies, and representatives of

international organisations.

The presentation received strong applause and generated extensive discussion, prompting a prolonged interactive session. Participants expressed keen interest in understanding the implementation processes and the programme's impacts on biodiversity conservation, community governance, deforestation reduction, and sustainable land-use management.

The presentation was delivered in three parts. Mr Alade Adeleke provided an overview of the Gola Rainforest National Park and the REDD+ Programme, highlighting achievements, lessons learned, and future priorities. Hon. Kanneh spoke on the governance model of the Gola Landscape, emphasising how inclusive governance structures have enabled effective community participation, strengthened policy and legislative support, and enhanced the delivery of impact-driven REDD+ activities. Paramount Chief Saffa Tamu focused on the role of traditional leadership, explaining how Paramount Chiefs and the Gola

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# Gola Community Stakeholders Showcase Community-Led Climate Action at COP30 Belém, Brazil. Contd



Chiefdoms Development Committees play a central role in forest management, benefit-sharing, and community development across the seven chiefdoms of the Gola Landscape.

## Engagement in Side Events and Strategic Platforms

Beyond the Sierra Leone Pavilion, the Gola delegation actively participated in several thematic platforms and side events. These included discussions on indigenous peoples and rural communities' access to climate finance at the Nature Hub; forests, green economy, and sustainability at the Forests Pavilion; community perspectives on carbon finance in Liberia at the Liberia Pavilion; and gender dimensions of forest carbon financing. The delegation also visited various exhibitions and cultural displays and held one-on-one meetings with delegates from different countries to exchange experiences and explore collaboration opportunities. The participation of Gola community stakeholders at COP30 highlighted the importance of locally-led

solutions in addressing global climate challenges. The delegation returned to Sierra Leone on 22 November 2025, strengthened by international recognition and renewed partnerships to further advance conservation, climate action, and sustainable development in the Gola Landscape.

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*By Alade Adeleke, RSPB*

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