

# Newsletter 1 - 2026

## Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

*Connecting people to nature.*



Dear readers,

Strengthening collaboration with partners, CSSL has achieved a lot in conservation over the years and we continue to do just that in order to maintain the impact we have so far registered in our operational communities in Sierra Leone.

In this edition, we shed light on how awareness raising is yielding positive results as school

children of the Baptist Secondary School in Mambolo rescued and safely released a Barn owl, and more.

Wishing our noble partners, members and friends a happy reading.

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





# Strengthening Resilience through Nutrition-Sensitive Climate

## Action in Sierra Leone



### Shabro River Estuary Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone Shabro River Estuary Map

The Nutrition-sensitive Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Program in Sierra Leone (NuCAMPS) is a transformative initiative funded by the Embassy of Ireland. The program supports the Government of Sierra Leone in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on marginalized women and girls. Implemented across Bonthe, Moyamba, and Falaba districts, NuCAMPS is a four-year project currently in its second year.

The initiative is delivered through a partnership of key organizations, including Movement towards Peace and Development (MoPADA), the Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency (SLMet), Conservation Society Sierra Leone (CSSL), and Action Against Hunger, which serves as the principal grantee.

NuCAMPS adopts a multi-sectoral approach to strengthen resilience and improve livelihoods. In the area of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), the program enhances access to safe water and sanitation services in communities and health facilities, contributing to improved public health outcomes.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and Protection (MHPSS-P) services are integrated across all interventions to promote wellbeing, resilience, and protection, particularly for vulnerable populations.

In food security and livelihoods, the project promotes climate-smart agriculture by providing farmers with improved inputs, access to weather information, and financial services. This supports increased productivity and resilience to climate shocks.

Nutrition and health interventions emphasize the production and consumption of climate-resilient, nutritious crops and livestock.

Through Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC), Early Childhood Development (ECD), and Maternal, Infant and Young Child Feeding (MIYCF) programs, the initiative strengthens community knowledge and practices. Nutrition services are also enhanced using national Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) guidelines.

The program further addresses climate change and environmental sustainability by supporting mangrove restoration, establishing woodlots, and promoting energy-efficient cooking solutions to reduce environmental degradation.

The principal objective of NuCAMPS is to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households by promoting climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive agriculture while improving access to essential services such as WASH, health, and sustainable energy. Specific objectives include increasing agricultural productivity, enhancing dietary diversity, and promoting sustainable energy adoption.

Overall, NuCAMPS represents a holistic and integrated response to climate change, food insecurity, and social vulnerability in Sierra Leone, ensuring that communities are better equipped to thrive in the face of growing environmental and economic challenges.

*by Joseph Alex Saidu Sannoh/CSSL*

# BEAUTIFUL BIRDS OF SIERRA LEONE

## Black Sparrowhawk

### *Astur melanoleucus*



The black sparrowhawk (*Astur melanoleucus*), sometimes known as the black goshawk or great sparrowhawk, is a bird of prey belonging to the family Accipitridae. It was formerly placed in the genus *Accipiter*. It occurs mainly in forest and non-desert areas south of the Sahara, particularly where there are large trees suitable for nesting; favored habitat includes suburban and human-altered landscapes. It preys predominantly on birds of moderate size, such as pigeons and doves, in suburban areas.

Aberdeen creek, mangrove areas in Lungi and Tasso Island and wellington wetlands are its regular hunting areas in Sierra Leone.



# Success Story: Restoring Mangroves, Reviving Livelihoods in Tissanah



For years, the coastal community of Tissanah in the Western Area Rural District faced a steady loss of its once-thriving mangrove ecosystem. These mangroves, which served as vital breeding grounds for fish and natural barriers against coastal erosion, became severely degraded due to unsustainable harvesting, weak enforcement of environmental regulations, and limited awareness of sustainable practices.

The underlying challenge was rooted in poverty and a heavy dependence on mangrove resources for fuelwood and livelihoods, with few alternative income opportunities available. Despite the Government of Sierra Leone, through the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), designating these areas as protected, local enforcement remained insufficient. As a result, fish stocks declined, coastal erosion intensified, and women in particular were forced to travel longer distances in search of firewood, placing additional strain on households.

Reflecting on this situation, Chief Ibrahim S. Kamara noted, "We knew the mangroves were disappearing, but we depended on them every day and had no other option." Similarly, Madam Fatmata Sesay shared, "The fish reduced and getting firewood became harder; it affected how we lived."

In response, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), with support from Jersey Overseas Aid through GOAL Sierra Leone, implemented a targeted mangrove restoration and community monitoring initiative between October and December 2025. The intervention combined ecological restoration with community empowerment, ensuring that local people became active stewards of their environment.

Through participatory approaches, CSSL engaged traditional leaders, youth, and women's groups to identify degraded sites and lead restoration efforts. As a result, 50 hectares of degraded mangrove forest were successfully restored using community labor. In addition, local monitors were recruited and trained to oversee both restored and intact mangrove areas, while supporting the enforcement of community bylaws regulating resource use.

This inclusive approach fostered a strong sense of ownership and collective responsibility. Mr. Boizie Kamara, a local monitor, explained, "When we started planting together, we realized we could bring back what we had lost." Sunkarie Koroma, a female monitor, added, "Being part of the monitoring team made me feel responsible for protecting our mangroves."

# Success Story: Restoring Mangroves, Reviving Livelihoods in Tissanah. Contd.

The restored mangrove areas are recording an impressive survival rate of approximately 85%, signaling strong ecological recovery. Fish habitats are gradually regenerating, contributing to improved livelihoods, while illegal cutting has significantly declined due to active community monitoring and enforcement.

Beyond environmental gains, the intervention has transformed community attitudes. There is now increased compliance with bylaws, stronger local governance, and a growing commitment to sustainable natural resource management.

“ We now see the mangroves coming back, and it gives us hope for our fishing. We protect them because we understand their value for our future”.

*Mrs. Isha Conteh, Women's Leaders,  
Tissanah*

To ensure sustainability, the project strengthened community governance systems, embedded monitoring mechanisms, and promoted long-term conservation practices. Looking ahead, Bobson Kobba, Project Manager (JOA/CSSL), emphasized, “This is just the beginning. With over 250 hectares of degraded mangrove areas in the Western Area Rural, CSSL is committed to expanding restoration efforts and supporting more communities.”

The success of this intervention demonstrates that while policy frameworks are important, lasting impact is achieved when communities are empowered, engaged, and equipped to manage their natural resources sustainably.

*by Bobson Kobba/CSSL & Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya*



# Birdlife Returns to Regent Landslide Site Through Conservation Efforts



The remarkable recovery of biodiversity at the Mortomeh landslide site in Regent has offered renewed hope for environmental restoration and conservation in Sierra Leone. During a birdwatching activity organized by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) last November under the Freetown Bird Club initiative, participants witnessed firsthand the gradual return of vegetation and birdlife to the once-devastated landscape.

The event was graced by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Jiwoh Abdulai, whose presence underscored the government's commitment to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

As participants explored the site together, it became evident that the ecosystem is steadily regenerating. The recovery of vegetation has created favorable conditions for avifauna to return, demonstrating the positive impact of strict environmental protection measures implemented in the area. Conservationists expressed optimism that similar measures can be replicated across protected areas throughout Sierra Leone to support ecological restoration and wildlife conservation.

The birdwatching exercise brought together the Gola Country Manager, the President of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, and members of the Birding and Conservation Club. The outing proved highly successful, with participants identifying over thirty bird species during the activity.

The highlight of the day was the sighting of a pair of Yellow-casqued hornbill, a significant and exciting discovery that further demonstrated the ecological recovery taking place at the site.

The activity stands as a strong example of effective collaboration between Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, government institutions, and local conservation enthusiasts in promoting environmental stewardship and biodiversity conservation in Sierra Leone.



*Text by: Charles Showers/CSSL President  
Photos by: Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya/CSSL*



# Strengthening Evidence-Based Advocacy on Oil and Gas Pollution in Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone is emerging as a promising offshore oil and gas frontier, with renewed seismic surveys and plans for a large licensing round. While commercial production has not yet begun, expectations are high that extraction will commence soon. This development brings both opportunity and risk, particularly for the country's fragile coastal and marine ecosystems that support biodiversity, livelihoods, food security, and climate resilience.

Despite these risks, public awareness—especially among coastal communities—remains limited. Oil pollution from fishing vessels, small industries, and mechanical activities is already evident, even before large-scale extraction begins. Addressing these challenges requires informed, strategic, and collaborative advocacy grounded in credible evidence.

In response, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), with support from the MAVA Foundation through the Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM), convened a training workshop on evidence-based advocacy in Freetown on 12 February 2026. The training brought together environmental CSOs and media representatives and aimed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively advocate against oil and gas pollution using data-driven approaches.

Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya, the CSSL Communications Manager, facilitated the training and walked participants through interactive sessions, exploring key advocacy concepts, including evidence-based messaging, stakeholder mapping, and strategic engagement with decision-makers. He placed emphasis on the importance of credibility, legality, and factual data in influencing policy and public opinion. "If your advocacy is born out of personal vendetta and emotions, then you are on the straight road to failure. Advocacy that is evidence-based has a huge tendency of being successful", Mr. Dumbuya admonished trainees.

Participants were introduced to the advocacy cycle, learning how to design structured advocacy plans that link

research evidence to clear objectives, targeted messaging, and stakeholder engagement strategies. The training highlighted the importance of setting SMART objectives and developing realistic implementation frameworks supported by adequate resources.

The workshop also focused on practical strategies to address oil and gas pollution, including strengthening environmental regulations, enhancing community awareness, improving data transparency, and fostering collaboration between CSOs, media, and industry stakeholders.

Key outcomes included improved understanding of advocacy principles, stronger partnerships between CSOs and media institutions, and enhanced capacity to design and implement impactful advocacy campaigns. Participants also gained deeper insight into the environmental and social implications of oil and gas pollution.

“We cannot wait for what happened to countries like Mauritius, Ghana, Nigeria, etc. to happen to us before we act. It will then be disastrous. This training is therefore very timely and useful to us as civil society. We should act now”.

*David Joseph Allieu, civil society activist*

“This training has equipped me with the right knowledge and skills to use the microphone, as a journalist, to demand accountability from all those involved in the oil and gas sector”, Munya Bawoh, Journalist from Kenema.

The initiative underscores the importance of collaboration, research, and informed advocacy in safeguarding Sierra Leone's coastal and marine environments. As the country moves toward oil and gas production, ensuring accountability and sustainable resource management will depend on strong, evidence-based advocacy driven by empowered local actors.

*by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya/CSSL*

# Scarcies Baptist Secondary School Nature Club

## Inspires Owl Conservation in Mambolo

In October 2025, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), led by Charles Showers and Foday Kamara, paid a significant outreach visit to Scarcies Baptist Secondary School in Mambolo. The visit marked the establishment of a school-based Nature Club aimed at promoting environmental awareness and wildlife conservation among students and teachers.

The Nature Club, which consists of enthusiastic pupils and two dedicated teachers, was created to sensitize students and the wider community on the importance of preserving nature. Special attention was given to the conservation of owls, birds that are often misunderstood and wrongly associated with superstition and evil in many communities. As a result, owls are frequently killed out of fear and misinformation.

To challenge these harmful perceptions, the Nature Club organized an engaging awareness campaign during the school's morning devotion, attended by students, teachers, and community members. Through drama performances, poems, songs, and skits, the students highlighted the ecological importance of owls and encouraged community members to protect them rather than persecute them. The performances served as a powerful tool for changing attitudes and promoting coexistence with wildlife.

The impact of the sensitization campaign became evident on 17 February 2026, when a group of Junior Secondary School 2 pupils discovered a young Barn Owl at the back of the school building. Prior to the awareness sessions, the pupils admitted they would likely have harassed or harmed the bird. However, empowered by the knowledge gained through the Nature Club activities, the students chose a different path.

Instead of harming the owl, the pupils carefully took it to the school principal, Alie Walter Kargbo, who immediately contacted the Nature Club coordinators, Tejan M. Bangura and Ibrahim Fallah Kamara, to ensure the bird's safety.

Following discussions with Nature Club members, a decision was made to relocate the owlet to a secure area on the roof of the school building, where its mother could easily find and care for it. The bird was monitored closely for two weeks, during which it frequently changed positions around the building as it adapted to its environment.

By 28 February 2026, the owlet could no longer be found in the monitored area. Nature Club members believe it had successfully reunited with its mother and moved on to a safer location.

This remarkable story demonstrates the power of environmental education and community engagement in changing attitudes toward wildlife conservation.

What could have been another case of fear-driven harm became a shining example of compassion, awareness, and responsible environmental stewardship among young people in Mambolo.



*by Tejan M. Bangura, Nature Club Head,  
Scarcies Baptist Secondary School, Mambolo*

# Sierra Leone and Liberia Advance Gola Landscape Peace Park Through Technical Workshop in Kenema



The Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia have taken a significant step toward operationalizing the Gola Landscape Peace Park, following a three-day technical workshop held in Kenema from March 11 to 13, 2026.

The workshop brought together government officials, conservation experts, and strategic partners united by a shared goal: safeguarding the Greater Gola Transboundary Landscape while promoting sustainable development and strengthening community resilience.

The presence of the Liberian delegation in Sierra Leone underscored the strong bilateral commitment between the two nations to protect the Gola Forest, a critical ecological zone that spans both countries. Discussions during the workshop focused on identifying key requirements and practical actions necessary to bring the Peace Park initiative into full operation, reinforcing cross-border collaboration in conservation efforts.

Prominent members of the Liberian delegation included Dr. Emmanuel K. Urey Yarkpawolo, Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia; Hon. Rudolph J. Merab Sr., Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority; Michael Taire, Programme Manager of the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL); and Mr. Peter Wleh Nyensuah Sr., Consultant to the Liberia National Tourism Authority, alongside other distinguished participants.

The workshop was co-organized by the Environment Protection Agency - Sierra Leone (EPASL) and BirdLife International in partnership with the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), under the GEF-8 Guinean Forests Integrated Programme, with support from leading conservation partners including Conservation International (CI), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the European Commission (EC), FAO and IUCN.

Participants emphasized that the Gola Landscape Peace Park extends beyond conservation objectives. It serves as a platform for advancing sustainable livelihoods, enhancing climate resilience, and fostering peaceful cross-border cooperation. Deliberations centered on actionable, community-driven strategies to ensure the long-term success of the initiative while delivering measurable benefits to local populations.

At the conclusion of the workshop, both governments and their partners reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the Peace Park initiative. The collaboration was highlighted as a potential model for transboundary environmental stewardship across West Africa, demonstrating how joint efforts can effectively balance conservation priorities with sustainable development goals.

*by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya/CSSL*

# Restoring Biodiversity and Community Pride at Big Water

In the Western Area Peninsula of Sierra Leone, the Big Water community has faced significant environmental degradation due to deforestation and other unsustainable human activities. This has led to loss of biodiversity, reduced ecosystem services, and declining environmental quality.

To address these challenges, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) received funding support from Jersey Overseas Aid Commission (JOA) through CAFOD and worked in partnership with the Big Water community in the implementation of a project entitled, "Integrated Action for Ecosystem Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Western Area Peninsula - National Park". The project focused on restoring degraded landscapes through planting trees in critical areas and within household spaces. Community members, including youth, women and local leaders, were actively involved at every stage of the initiative with key activities, including identification of degraded areas for restoration, mobilization and training of community members, planting of hundreds of trees across the community, and continuous community engagement and awareness on environmental conservation.

The initiative led to the planting of a total of 200 terrestrial wild and economic trees - Guava, orange, mango, cashew, and avocado among others, both at individual backyards and in selected degraded areas to ensure increased vegetation cover. Community members developed a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility toward their natural environment.

The project also strengthened community cohesion as residents worked together toward a shared goal. As the trees grow, the community is already witnessing improved environmental conditions and renewed biodiversity. The initiative has inspired hope for a sustainable future and demonstrated the power of collective community action.

“ This project has brought our community together and given us a sense of purpose. We're proud to be taking care of our environment and working towards a brighter future for ourselves and future generations”.

*Mrs. Memunatu Banyu,  
Headwoman of Big Water*

The Big Water tree planting initiative stands as a strong example of how community-driven environmental action can restore ecosystems and empower local populations. It highlights the importance of partnerships and inclusive participation in achieving sustainable development outcomes.



*by Aruna Koroma/CSSL*



# CSSL THANKS ALL MEMBERS, PARTNERS AND DONORS!



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