



THE PEPPERBIRD

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ORGANIZATION PROFILE



The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) was established in 1986. Since its foundation, the SCNL has remained the lead national conservation organization in Liberia.

We are a non-for-profit organization and the lead national conservation organization in Liberia. Our mandate is to educate, encourage and assist the society understand and appreciate nature, build consensus on effective management of biodiversity by ensuring that natural resources are sustainably managed.

Our Vision:

Our vision is a Liberia where biodiversity is sustainably managed for our wellbeing.

Our Mission:

Our mission is to promote biodiversity conservation by inspiring people to value nature through science, forests, and climate action, environmental education, partnership, stakeholder engagement and community development.

Our Values:

Passion: We are inspired by people and nature and driven to lead change for a sustainable future.

Respect: We build relationships based on trust and mutual benefit, respect each other, respect the demands, ideas, and customs of the communities and cultures around us.

Collaboration and Partnership: We work with others to reach our goals.

Accountability and Transparency: We strive to uphold values such as accountability and transparency.

Our works have impacted the lives of people in forest fringed communities, and the landscapes.

We are a partner of Birdlife International, a strong partner that has been provided support; funding, capacity building, technical, for us all in an effort to enhance our work and conservation in Liberia.

Motto: Helping to Conserve Nature

KNOW YOUR SPECIES

Yellow-Casqued Hornbill



CONSERVATION VALUE

Ecosystem Role:

Seed Dispersal: As a frugivore, it helps in dispersing seeds, which is crucial for the regeneration of tropical forests.

Insect Control: Its diet includes insects and other invertebrates, helping to control these populations and maintain ecological balance.

Indicator Species:

The health of hornbill populations can indicate the overall health of their forest habitat. Conservation efforts for hornbills often benefit a range of other species in the same ecosystem.

Biodiversity Preservation:

Protecting the Yellow-casqued Hornbill contributes to the preservation of the rich biodiversity of West African rainforests.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Height: Adult Yellow-casqued Hornbills measure approximately 60 to 70 cm (24 to 28 inches) in length. Their size and striking appearance make them one of the larger hornbill species.

DIET

Primary Diet:

Fruits: They primarily consume fruits, especially seeds and berries found in the forest canopy.

Invertebrates: Their diet also includes small insects, spiders, and scorpions, which provide necessary proteins and other nutrients.

Feeding Behavior:

Flocking and Termite Mounds: The birds often gather in large flocks to feed on termite mounds, showcasing their social foraging behavior.

Overall, the Yellow-casqued Hornbill's conservation is important for maintaining forest health and biodiversity, while its diet and physical characteristics highlight its role and adaptations within its environment.



Mr. Alexander Peal
Acting Chairman
SCNL Board of Directors

The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) was founded in 1986 with a mandate to maintain biodiversity conservation and elevate the environmental standards of living for all Liberians. Since its inception, SCNL has been a powerful voice advocating for conservation and biodiversity issues in Liberia.

Liberia is endowed with rich natural resources, including the remaining portion of the Upper Guinea Forest, home to several endemic species and a crucial element in the fight against climate change. The SCNL passionately advocates for the conservation of this vital forest and the diverse species it shelters.

With over 600 bird species, 75 reptile and amphibian species, 150 small and large animal species, 2,900 vascular plant species, and 1,000 insect species, Liberia is at a critical juncture in the fight against climate change. SCNL, as the leading local biodiversity and conservation organization, is proud to support the efforts of the Liberian government, the international community, and its global partners. Together, we have achieved significant milestones in Liberia and the West African sub-region.

Established to maintain wholesome biodiversity conservation and improve environmental standards, SCNL collaborates closely with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and other valued partners. Our notable achievements include the establishment of the Gola Forest National Park

(GFNP) in Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties and the ongoing process of creating the Foya and Kpo Proposed Protected Areas.

Understanding the balance between conservation and the socio-economic well-being of local communities in forest-fringe areas, SCNL has implemented alternative livelihood programs. These initiatives include beekeeping, village saving loans, forest-friendly cocoa production, and climate-smart agriculture, demonstrating our commitment to supporting communities traditionally reliant on natural resources.

As the world increasingly turns to nature-based solutions to address the climate crisis, the role of forests extends beyond biodiversity conservation to climate regulation. SCNL recognizes this shift and emphasizes the need to protect forests from threats while leveraging emerging conservation opportunities, particularly in carbon markets. This preface reflects SCNL's vision and commitment to effective biodiversity conservation. While our efforts have led to significant milestones, we acknowledge that the magnitude of the task requires collaborative endeavors. We eagerly anticipate partnerships, including those with the corporate and private sectors, to collectively and effectively conserve Liberia's biodiversity and judiciously manage its natural resources, ensuring a legacy that benefits future generations.

At SCNL, we remain steadfast in our commitment to preserving Liberia's rich and vital forests. Our mission is to promote biodiversity conservation by inspiring people to value nature through science, forests, and climate action, environmental education, partnership, stakeholder engagement and community development. We invite you to join us in this crucial endeavor.

We aim to strike a harmonious balance between the conservation of natural resources and the sustainable exploitation of these assets. We recognize the importance of providing viable alternative livelihoods for forest-dependent communities who rely on activities such as mining and logging. By fostering innovative solutions and support frameworks, to promote sustainable practices that benefit both people and the planet.

Together, we can make a meaningful impact. Let us work towards a future where Liberia's forests thrive, and its communities prosper.

As you read through this newsletter, we hope you'll find inspiration and opportunities to contribute to our shared vision for a sustainable future. Thank you for your continued support and dedication.



Michael F. Garbo
Executive Director

Dear Readers,

As we approach the end of another year, SCNL is delighted to share updates and celebrate the achievements we have made over the past three months. These milestones reflect our collective efforts with our dedicated partners, all working towards enhancing conservation efforts in Liberia.

Over the last quarter, we have made significant progress thanks to the unwavering commitment of our partners. During this period, we engaged the communities in our landscapes through several programs/project; climate smart agriculture, empowerment programs for cocoa farmers, and provided micro-loans for forest fringe communities. These achievements are testament to the generous support from our partners accompanied by the relentless effort of our team here at the SCNL.

Through the FOLUR, WaBiled, Leh -Go-Green, Conservation Work (Kpatawee Gazettement) Probio Project, Ecological Restoration Fund, One-Tree-Planted, Activa Small Grant, CBFM UNDP and UNDP ECO-BRIGADE, the above mentioned activities/programs were carried out to improve the livelihoods of people living in the landscapes.

Our collaborative efforts have not only achieved impressive results but also highlight our dedication to

conserving Liberia's biodiversity. This progress has been recognized by our partners through their support of the LEH-GO-GREEN, Probio, FOLUR, One Tree planted, and WABiLED projects.

Looking ahead, we are excited about several new projects on the horizon. We anticipate that these upcoming initiatives will further our impact, advancing conservation works in our landscapes while improving the livelihoods of forest communities.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, donors, government agencies, conservation organizations, and local communities. Their involvement has been instrumental in advancing our conservation goals, and we look forward to further collaboration in the years to come.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment. Your contributions are the cornerstone of our success, and we are confident that, together, we will achieve even greater milestones in the coming months and years.

Warm regards,

BREAKING GROUND IN BIO-MONITORING

SCNL FORGES AHEAD WITH CUTTING-EDGE CONSERVATION EFFORTS



In a landmark stride towards bolstering its conservation endeavors, the science and conservation department of the SCNL under Pillar-1 undertook a biomonitoring training. This pioneering training will transform conservation works here at the SCNL.

The one-day intensive training was facilitated by Jessica Bryant, an experienced researcher from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

The training provided needed capacity building for the science and conservation department at the SCNL.

The training focused on camera trap collection and a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). With this SOP, technicians at the SCNL will be guided by a procedure in camera trapping and related areas.



“As we march steadfastly towards a future where SCNL stands as the vanguard of conservation data, the establishment of a robust database management system is paramount”

Participants at the training included Dickarmien Alvis Deemie, head science and conservation department, Gordon B. Sambolah, Abraham Flomo, Shedrick E. Smith and Josephine Wansay, an intern from the United States Forest Service (USFS).

To enhance data processing, a state of the art color printer and a 22” desktop computer were procured for the department.

“This training marks a watershed moment for the SCNL and as we march steadfastly towards a future where SCNL stands as the custodian of conservation data in Liberia, the establishment of a robust database

management system is paramount.” Dickarmien A. Deemie noted.

We extend our gratitude to WABiLED and RSPB for their unwavering support to empower the team here at the SCNL to enable us excel in their professional pursuits and make meaningful and much needed contributions to Liberia’s conservation efforts.

SCNL ROLE IN THE GEF-FOLUR PROJECT



SCNL is a key implementing partner for the GEF-FOLUR project in the northwest landscape of Liberia. The project extend vital livelihood support to cocoa farmers, as well as cooperatives through a holistic approach that includes food system, land use, and restoration programs.

The project undertook a climate smart agriculture training needs assessment. The project undertook a climate smart agriculture training needs assessment in the 2nd quarter of 2024. This assessment has been a beacon of empowerment for local farmers.



328 local farmers, 109 women, and 219 men took part in the climate smart agriculture training needs assessment in the northwest landscape.

The inclusion of both gender underscores SCNL commitment to gender parity and community inclusivity in all its programs.

Building upon this assessment, SCNL is poised to collaborate with seven (7) cocoa farmers and cooperatives across the project landscapes. The cooperatives include Eastern Tewor Agriculture Development Association, Hard work Multipurpose Agriculture Cooperative, Farwehin Agriculture Cooperative, (Grand Cape Mount County),

Middle Hills (Gbarpolu County), Dabudakai, Voinjama District Agriculture Cooperative, and Guma Mende Cooperative (Lofa County). These cooperatives represent the bedrock of community-driven development and sustainable land use and management.

The journey ahead is fraught with challenges, but also brimming with boundless opportunities and SCNL will continue to chart new frontiers in community engagement to foster resilience and provide alternative livelihoods for forest communities, and environmental stewardship across the northwest landscape. While ensuring secured livelihoods as well.

EMPOWERING COCOA COMMUNITIES

ERF's IMPACT IN LOFA COUNTY



The Ecological Restoration Fund (ERF) project is undertaking a groundbreaking initiative in cocoa farming. A two-day training in support of this initiative was conducted for cocoa farmers in Kolahun and Vahun districts in Lofa County. The two-day training provided vital education and skills in cocoa farming to enhance farmers' yields. Farmers received hands-on skills development on cocoa farming to improve farming practices and increase farmers' production.

In Kamatahun, the SCNL/ERF Livelihood Officer, Matthew Williams and his team also conducted a climate smart agriculture training session for 50 cocoa farmers. The training focused on climate change impacts and adaptive solutions. Visual aids, peer learning were used in the training to give practical and hands-on skills on improved cocoa farming to farmers, the sessions were interactive with participants sharing their experiences as well.

SCNL and partners recognize the importance of alternative livelihood in conservation and are dedicated to providing alternative livelihood and sustaining the livelihoods of forest communities. The project also provides micro loans to cocoa farmers



in the project areas. SCNL Loan officer Yuconjay N. Barchure disbursed \$1,375,000 Liberian Dollars to 55 cocoa farmers in Sebehill and Guma-Mende cooperatives in Lofa County. Farmers were trained in small business startups and management before being listed to benefit from the micro-loan program..

At the end of the trainings, farmers committed to implementing climate smart agriculture practices such as the planting of shade trees and food crops such as plantains and bananas.

Regular monitoring is done to ensure that farmers are implementing these climate smart agriculture practices across the districts covered under the project and to ensure that loans provided are used and managed properly by farmers.

HARNESSING INNOVATION

SCNL ELEVATES EXCELLENCE WITH MICROSOFT 365



The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) has taken a significant step forward in promoting institutional growth and enhancing staff communication by deploying Microsoft 365 Standard Licensed software for 50 users. This robust online platform has transformed how our staff communicate and collaborate, fostering a culture of excellence and efficiency.

The integration of Microsoft 365 has notably strengthened SCNL's Knowledge Management System (KMS). With its comprehensive data management capabilities, staff can effortlessly access relevant resource documents anytime and anywhere, facilitating seamless information sharing with partners and stakeholders. This upgrade ensures that our teams are well-equipped with the tools they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Recognizing the importance of effective utilization, SCNL organized a three-day intensive training session covering the entire Microsoft 365 suite, including Outlook, One-drive, SharePoint, and Teams. This

training has significantly boosted staff capacity and knowledge, empowering them to manage and maintain the KMS platform with greater proficiency. The hands-on experience has equipped our team with the skills necessary to leverage these powerful tools to their fullest potential.

This transformative initiative was made possible with support funding provided by our partner, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to RSPB for their unwavering support and commitment to fostering institutional growth at SCNL.

As we continue to advance, SCNL remains dedicated to embracing innovative technologies and investing in our staff's development. Together, we are paving the way for a brighter, more connected future.

SCNL NATURE TALK NINTH EDITION

ONE VOICE FOR NATURE ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE ON CONSERVING LIBERIA'S BIODIVERSITY



In its relentless quest to conserve Liberia's biodiversity, Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) held a one-day Policy and Advocacy Roundtable Dialogue on May 23, 2024, in Monrovia.

The dialogue brought together stakeholders including policymakers, scientists, community leaders, partners, media professionals, and students, to address the critical challenges facing conservation efforts and to discuss actionable solutions. The round-table dialogue aimed to create a collaborative platform where various voices could be heard and where effective strategies could be developed to mitigate the challenges threatening Liberia's rich biodiversity. This inclusive dialogue underscored the urgent need for coordinated actions and policies that can drive substantial improvements in conservation practices.

The dialogue opened with a welcome remark by SCNL's Executive Director, Michael F. Garbo, who welcomed participants, and panelists to the dialogue, while Mr. Stephan CoCCo of the European Union emphasized the importance of preserving Liberia's unique biodiversity. The address highlighted the ecological and economic benefits of conservation and set the tone for the day's discussions.

Panelists:

- Cllr. Nyanquoi Z. Dolo - Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
- Atty. J.Adam Monibah - Liberia Land Authority (LLA)
- Emmanuel Vaye - Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy
- Margaret Beyslow - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Loretta Aeletha Pope-Kai-Civil Society Organizations of Liberia

Each panelist brought a wealth of knowledge and a unique perspective to the discussion, providing a comprehensive overview of the current status of conservation landscape in Liberia. The one-day event was expertly moderated by Abraham Tumbey, who guided the discussions with a wealth of experience in the conservation sector. His moderation ensured that the dialogue remained focused, productive, and inclusive. Panelists and participants addressed pressing issues such as illegal mining, inactive logging companies, encroachments, poaching, and the issuance of mining licenses within and near conservation areas. These activities pose significant threats to Liberia's forests and biodiversity. The dialogue emphasized the need



for data-driven policy changes, while participants advocated for policies that reflect the current realities and challenges, ensuring the protection of biodiversity while promoting sustainable development.

The dialogue was an invaluable opportunity for all participants to share insights, develop a deeper understanding of the conservation landscape, and come up with a collective commitment to protecting Liberia’s natural heritage. Key outcomes included a consensus on the urgency of addressing illegal activities within conservation areas and a commitment to enhancing policy frameworks to better support conservation efforts.

Enhancing coordination among stakeholders was stressed, underscoring the need for stakeholders to collaborate to effectively address conservation challenges and sustainable solutions.

The dialogue concluded with the formulation of actionable policy recommendations. These recommendations aim to safeguard Liberia’s natural heritage, ensuring that conservation efforts are effective and sustainable.

Participants agreed on the necessity of ongoing advocacy and the implementation of the proposed policy recommendations. SCNL plans to continue this momentum by engaging with policymakers and stakeholders, ensuring that the dialogue translates into tangible actions and reforms.



SCNL extends its heartfelt gratitude to all participants, panelists, and moderators for their invaluable contributions. Special thanks to the sponsors and partners who made this event possible. Their support is crucial in driving forward the conservation agenda and ensuring the protection of Liberia’s biodiversity.

As we move forward, the outcomes of this round-table dialogue will serve as a foundation for ongoing advocacy and action, ensuring that Liberia’s biodiversity is preserved for future generations. SCNL remains committed to fostering partnerships and driving initiatives that promote sustainable conservation practices.

Together, we can ensure that Liberia’s natural heritage thrives, benefiting both the environment and the communities that depend on it.

HOW COMMUNITY EFFORTS ARE TRANSFORMING CONSERVATION



The story of Varguaye and Benduma is a powerful example of resilience and adaptation in the face of human-wildlife conflict. For nine years, these communities, located in Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia, struggled to farm due to forest elephants destroying their rice crops. The traditional farming method, which involved cutting down trees and burning the land before planting, was no match for the elephants. This led to years of starvation and despair.

Varguaye, situated in Manner Clan, Gola Koneeh District, and Benduma, 7 miles away in Kposo Clan, Porkpa District, are both surrounded by forests that are home to a significant population of forest elephants. The rich biodiversity of these areas made them focal points for the UNDP-Community Based Forestry Management (CBFM) project, funded by the Swedish Embassy. This

project aims to conserve the elephants and their habitats through community involvement and sustainable practices.

The turning point came when the CBFM project introduced a new sustainable farming approach by working with 140 farmers from both communities to switch to lowland rice farming. Initially, there was skepticism due to their past failures, but the results were astonishing. Rice planted on 5 hectares of lowland grew exceptionally well, and for the first time in almost a decade, the communities saw their rice ready for harvest within just three months.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this success is that the elephants, which had been the primary cause of their farming failures, avoided the lowland areas. The



elephants' fear of getting stuck in the mud allowed the rice to thrive without disturbance.

This pilot project has not only restored hope in Varguaye and Benduma but has also inspired the communities to invest more time and effort into lowland rice farming. According to Mr. Manah Jallah, the Town Chief of Varguaye, this is the first time in nine years that they have seen rice grow in their community. The skills and techniques taught by the project have empowered the farmers, and they are now eager to expand their production to feed not only their communities but also neighboring towns and villages.

Mr. Senesee Borbor, the Town Chief of Benduma, echoed this sentiment, stating, "The project has given us the skills needed to expand further even if the project were to end today. Our first harvest was around 15 bags of 25kg, but we are requesting 75 empty bags to fill after harvesting. There is a saying in Liberia, the dried dog is

sweet but what will you eat before the dog gets dried, which means if you tell some to conserve there must be some alternative livelihood and this project is helping us as we also ask for more support in the form of rich rice mill and water pump machine that will help us produce throughout the year"

The success of this project demonstrates the power of community-based initiatives and the importance of adapting farming practices to coexist with wildlife. The collaboration and support of the FDA, SCNL, CHAP, UNDP, and the Swedish Embassy have been crucial in making this transformation possible. The communities of Varguaye and Benduma now stand as beacons of hope, showing that even in the face of significant challenges, innovative solutions and perseverance can lead to sustainable success hereafter.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

SCNL STAND AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



“By training these Change Agents, we’re fostering a network of informed individuals who can champion the cause against GBV right at the grassroots level”

On June 21, 2024, in Tienii, Grand Cape Mount County, SCNL’s Gender and Safeguarding officer, Hawa Biddle-Dugbeh and team conducted a one-day training session. The objective was to equip Gender Based Violence (GBV) Change Agents in the communities with the knowledge and tools needed to address Gender Based Violence (GBV) effectively in the communities.

With support from RSPB, SCNL conducted a gender-based violence and safeguard awareness to educate and empower local communities in identifying and supporting victims and survivors of GBV.

Complaint mechanism and feedback was created and provided to participants to report gender based

violence and safeguarding cases in the communities. We believe in the power of education and local empowerment”, remarked Hawa Biddle-Dugbeh, Gender and Safeguard Officer of SCNL. “By training these Change Agents we are fostering a network of informed individuals who can champion the cause against GBV at the grassroot levels”.

As part of their commitment, SCNL provided each of the 14 GBV Change Agents with essential tools: a mobile phone, scratch cards, and sim card. This initiative not only facilitates effective communication but also enables Change Agents to report incidents and gather crucial data discreetly. Upholding the utmost confidentiality, the Change Agents will utilize recording and reporting forms to document incidents



“It shows that SCNL trusts us to be the eyes and ears in our communities. With these tools, we can make a real difference in protecting vulnerable individuals.”

and trends related to GBV in their communities. “This support means a lot to us,” shared one of the Change Agents. “It shows that SCNL trusts us to be the eyes and ears in our communities. With these tools, we can make a real difference in protecting vulnerable individuals. “

The initiative marks a significant step forward in SCNL’s broader mission to integrate gender mainstreaming into their conservation programs. By addressing GBV head-on, SCNL and its partners are not only safeguarding participants but also contributing to a safer and more inclusive community environment.

Looking ahead, SCNL plans to expand this initiative, collaborating closely with local stakeholders and

development partners to ensure sustained impact. The goal remains clear: to create a future where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive free from the threat of violence.

As SCNL continues to lead by example, this effort serves as a beacon of hope and empowerment, resonating throughout Grand Cape Mount County.

PRESERVING LIBERIA'S WILDLIFE HERITAGE

INSIGHTS FROM WORLD CHIMPANZEE DAY



On July 14, 1960, Dr. Jane Goodall embarked on her pioneering research journey with wild chimpanzees in what is now Gombe National Park, Tanzania. This historic event marked the beginning of our understanding and appreciation for these remarkable creatures, leading to the establishment of World Chimpanzee Day celebrated annually on this day.

This occasion serves as a global platform to raise awareness about the challenges facing chimpanzees and the need to advocate for their protection and conservation.

In Liberia, the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) joins hands with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and other

conservation partners each year to commemorate World Chimpanzee Day. This year's event, was held at the FDA central office in Wein Town, Paynesville on Monday, July 15, 2024, brought together a diverse group of stakeholders including Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF), Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection (LCRP) and Humane Society International, Liberia.

The event commenced with an opening prayer led by Mr. Patrick Foday, followed by welcome remarks from Hon. Nora G. Bowier of FDA, who outlined the day's program.



The celebrations included cultural performances by Eddie Theater, highlighting the significance of chimpanzee conservation through song and drama. Statements from national and international partners underscored the collaborative efforts needed to safeguard Liberia’s wildlife, emphasizing the critical roles of education, law enforcement, and community engagement.

Hon. Rudolph J. Merab, Managing Director of FDA, delivered an impactful opening statement, emphasizing the ongoing threats faced by wildlife such as bushmeat hunting, illegal wildlife trade, and deforestation. He acknowledged the collective efforts of partners in supporting conservation initiatives and outlined key strategies moving forward, including strengthened law enforcement and community support.

SCNL remains steadfast in its commitment to chimpanzee conservation in Liberia. Partnering

closely with FDA, WCF, LIBASSA Wildlife Sanctuary, LCRP, Humane Society International, Liberia, and other conservation groups, continues to advocate for biodiversity conservation and habitat protection. Through collaborative efforts and community engagement, SCNL will strive to ensure a future where chimpanzees and their habitats are protected in Liberia.

As we reflect on Dr. Goodall’s legacy and contributions to chimpanzee conservation, we reaffirm our commitment to protecting Liberia’s wildlife heritage and promoting conservation throughout Liberia.

Together, we can secure a sustainable future where humans and wildlife coexist harmoniously, preserving Liberia’s natural treasures for generations to come.

SCNL AND WCF CELEBRATE SUCCESSFUL GRADUATION OF 30 COMMUNITY ECOGUARDS



SCNL, in partnership with the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) and under the PROBIO project with generous support from the EU, recently completed an intensive ten-day training course for 30 community Ecoguards. This program, held at the Forestry Training Institute (FTI), aimed to enhance participants' knowledge in Protected Area Management, Ecotourism, Botany, and Climate Change, among other vital topics.

The cohort was composed of 16 Ecoguards from the Northwest Landscape, the control area of SCNL, including 7 females and 9 males, and 14 from the Southeast.

A special graduation ceremony marked the culmination of this training, attended by distinguished guests including EU delegates, FDA representatives,



SCNL’s PROBIO project focal person, WCF staff, FTI staff, and the graduates themselves.

In his remarks, Shedrick E. Smith, SCNL’s Community Ecoguards Coordinator, expressed profound gratitude to the EU for their ongoing support and to the graduates for their dedication.

“It is with immense pride and joy that we come together to celebrate a significant milestone in the journey of our community Ecoguards toward environmental stewardship,” Shedrick Smith stated, “Today, we honor their dedication and hard work, which have culminated in their transformation into informed advocates for conservation”. He continued.

This training is more than a mere completion of a ten-day program; it represents the start of a new chapter. Our graduates are now empowered to lead by example, inspire their peers, and drive impactful change within their communities. Equipped with



the knowledge and skills to confront environmental challenges, they are poised to implement innovative solutions that champion sustainability and resilience.

Congratulations to all the graduates for their remarkable achievement and for embarking on this new phase of their journey as stewards of our environment.

COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY

CHANGING LIVES AND LANDSCAPES



The conservation landscape has seen significant upheaval in recent years. In my own words, the traditional strategy of encouraging communities to preserve forests by highlighting their ecological significance—such as their ability to store carbon and provide clean water and air—is no longer adequate. Nowadays, large-scale poaching motivated by the need for livelihoods, miners, and loggers pose a serious threat to conservation efforts. It is crucial to go beyond conventional conservation messaging in light of these obstacles. Our natural forests are essential for the global common good as we struggle with the worsening effects of climate change, so we must provide communities with substantial and sustainable alternative sources of income.

A shining example of this evolved approach to conservation can be found in the work of the Rainforest Trust project, titled “Empowering Communities to Protect Rainforests in Liberia since 2020.” This initiative has been instrumental in helping communities around the Gola Forest National Park not only understand but also appreciate the essence of conservation. The project has created employment for community members since 2020 till now. Through strategic support and community engagement, the Rainforest Trust has played a pivotal role in establishing community forests that serve as crucial corridors to the Gola Forest and the Foya Proposed Protected Area soon-to-be GbarLo National Park and habitats for key landscape species.

One of the most significant successes of this project has been its work with the Sokpo I and II communities that are in Sokpo clan, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia. With support from the Rainforest Trust, these communities have been on a transformative journey toward gaining legal status and entering into conservation agreements. These agreements provide financial incentives to the communities in exchange for their commitment to

preserving the forest and preventing deforestation.

This model not only ensures the protection of the forests but also offers a tangible, sustainable livelihood for the communities involved.

Sokpo Clan, encompassing approximately 65,757 hectares in Porkpa District, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia, and bordering Sierra Leone, is a significant area for conservation. It includes a portion of the Gola Forest National Park, which spans about 88,000 hectares and is home to two proposed Community Forests: Sokpo 1 (11,000 hectares) and Sokpo 2 (14,000 hectares).

Furthermore, the Rainforest Trust has been actively supporting the Sokpo communities in finalizing the customary land formalization process. This legal recognition is a critical step in empowering the communities to manage their lands sustainably and protect them from external pressures. The robust engagement meetings organized by the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), and the Liberia Land Authority (LAA) have also been key in fostering a strong conservation ethic among the community leadership.

As a result of these efforts, the leadership of Sokpo has taken a firm stand to keep the forest solely for conservation purposes. The Clan Chief and the Community Land Development and Management Committee are leading the change, organizing mass meetings, and reaching out to hard-to-reach communities to enforce a ban on forest farming, chainsawing, and timber harvesting. Their commitment to conservation has transformed Sokpo into a model community, where the message of forest protection is driven from within.

According to the Clan Chief of Sokpo Clan “I say thank you to SCNL, FDA, and Rainforest Trust for the support and now that we have known the importance of forest, we will go all out to make sure we set the forest aside for conservation purpose.

The logging company will cut all the trees and spoil our road but it is better to keep it and can enter into an agreement where the money comes to us directly that we can use to pay our midwives, put medicines in our clinics, and pay our volunteer teachers to teach our children. We are very happy about this news and we will work to protect the forest so we can enter into the conservation agreement. We have stopped our people from farming in the forest now so we are focusing our farming in the lowlands”.

The success of Sokpo illustrates the power of community-driven conservation. Thanks to the financial support and strategic guidance from the Rainforest Trust and FDA, Sokpo is becoming a champion of conservation in Liberia. The community's dedication to protecting their forests, coupled with the prospect of entering into a formal conservation agreement, ensures that the forests will remain intact for future generations.

This success story demonstrates that when communities are given the tools, knowledge, and incentives to protect their natural resources, they can become powerful stewards of conservation. The journey of Sokpo I and II is a testament to the effectiveness of integrating sustainable livelihoods into conservation strategies, ensuring that the benefits of forest protection are shared by those who live closest to forests.

SCNL STRIVES FOR EXCELLENCE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



At SCNL, our commitment to advancing workplace performance and organizational effectiveness remains a top priority. With the support of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) institutional grant, we have introduced a comprehensive Employee Performance Management System designed to align with our strategic objectives and optimize the potential of our human resources. The training was conducted by William A. Miller, RSPB Partnership Development Officer

This performance management system is pivotal in setting clear goals and providing regular feedback, which significantly enhances employees' ability to improve their performance and achieve their targets. The system fosters a collaborative approach to professional growth by facilitating mutual agreement between team members and managers on development needs.

A key strength of the system is its ability to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both managers and employees in the ongoing improvement process. This clarity ensures accountability and reinforces a shared commitment to excellence across the organization.

Structured feedback and review processes further enhance effective communication, leading to a better understanding and alignment of expectations.

Beyond its immediate benefits, the performance management system plays a crucial role in talent retention and future leadership planning. By addressing under-performance and recognizing achievements, the system not only strengthens employee relations but also boosts overall productivity. Employees are empowered to take ownership of their performance, fostering a sense of responsibility for their development and success.

The organization's dedication to employee success is reflected in the structured approach of the performance management system. This system supports fairness by addressing performance issues and celebrating accomplishments, ensuring that employees have a clear understanding of their job duties and performance expectations. As a result, it lays a solid foundation for mutual understanding and effective work practices, ultimately driving our collective success.



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