

## “The CPS Program Works to Prevent Conflict in all Aspects of Life”

*Says Dr. Sheku Kamara*

The lead Coordinator of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) Network Sierra Leone chapter who is also the Executive Director of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL); Dr. Sheku Kamara has told stakeholders in Freetown that the Network is poised to prevent conflict in all spheres of life.



Participants of the symposium posing for camera at the close of the session

Dr. Kamara was speaking at a one-day Symposium on Environmental Disaster Management and Land Use Planning on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018 in the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPFNP). The symposium was organized by CSSL; member of the CPS network in the Mano River Union. The symposium which was held at the British Council Hall attracted stakeholders from

institutions like the Office of National Security (ONS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), Environmental Foundation Africa (EFA), Fourah Bay



Members of the high table paying apt attention to presentations

College (FBC) and other organizations to strategically think of how best to manage disaster and land use planning in the WAPFNP and explore ways of forestalling the recurrence of the August 2017 mudslide and flooding in Sierra Leone.

The CPS Coordinator welcomed participants to the symposium which he said was convened to discuss very important issues that border on national security. He intimated that Sierra Leone is continuously facing an environmental challenge which was all the more reason why key stakeholders were invited to the meeting so as to brainstorm and bring out

short, medium and long term action points which could permanently save Sierra Leone from recurring calamities.

Mr. Joseph S. Turay from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maintained that massive environmental degradation has become the order of the day in Sierra Leone adding that improper land use is among the major reasons responsible for erosion of the natural buffers that protect communities from the risk of disaster. Turay identified global warming as one of the environmental changes responsible for the challenges to the security of the human race.

The Chairperson for the Board of the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA); Dr. Nana Pratt said that Sierra Leone is faced with a lot of biodiversity and environmental challenges. She disclosed that the surge in biodiversity problems and land degradation as the consequences of 'unruly and undisciplined human activities'. She asserted that the rising trend of disaster cannot be stemmed unless we as humans begin to challenge ourselves.

She observed that people can clearly see that the forests have been denuded and the only way forward now is to come together and work collaboratively to protect the country's biodiversity and wildlife.

The Founder of CSSL Dr. Sama Banya alluded to the spate of rock mining in the Western Area and declared that Sierra Leoneans are paving the way for disaster. He advised the younger generation not to give up, but to persevere in the fight against environmental disaster.

In his keynote address, the Director of Disaster Management at the Office of National Security (ONS); John Vandi Rogers described the symposium as 'appropriate and timely, especially at a time when we are striving to put behind the sad chapter of the twin disasters of landslide and floods that occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017 that claimed over 500 lives.

He noted that the issue of environmental disaster management has a direct bearing to human security claiming that human security in turn has a direct nexus on environmental security. He intimated that the Western Area Peninsular Forest (WAPF) is a unique forest reserve and one of the four key biodiversity areas in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Rogers urged his audience to take proactive and corrective measures to reduce the risk of disaster. He thus concluded by saying that "risk-based planning provides an opportunity to move beyond planning for natural hazards only to planning for the consequences of an event".

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## SiLNoRF Scales up Right to Food campaign in Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF)-a key partner of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) Network has embarked on a nationwide right to food campaign in Sierra Leone.

In June and July 2018, SiLNoRF engaged in a nationwide right to workshops on the implementation and monitoring of the FAO



Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food and Nutrition in Sierra Leone. As a way of gauging the opinions and good practices of stakeholders including World Food Programme (WFP), Diplomatic Missions, government line Ministries, local

authorities and councils, farmer groups Paramount Chiefs, District Councils, Farmers, Civil Society Organisations, SiLNoRF on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2018 brought together people from all walks of life to share their experiences and to develop a joint and participatory Right to Food Monitoring Framework. The events took place in the district Headquarters Towns of Makeni, Port Loko, Bo and Kenema. Outcomes of these engagements will be submitted to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

On Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 SiLNoRF wrapped up the regional monitoring events with a national a workshop.

While speaking at the workshop, the National Coordinator of SiLNoRF; Mohamed S. Conteh disclosed that an estimation of three million people, represents 49.8% of the population is food insecure in Sierra Leone. He further disclosed that there are more than eight hundred and fifty (850) million people worldwide suffering from hunger and under nourishment which why food insecurity has a major challenge in the country.

Conteh explained that despite the country's move to ratify various international, regional and national instruments, which oblige the state to respect and fulfil her citizens' right to food; the country is still facing challenges with respect to food insecurity.

*"SiLNoRF has a vision of making Sierra Leone where everyone has adequate and sufficient access to food and are able to claim their rights to it. As an organization, SiLNoRF is working towards the effective and efficient realisation of the right to food in the country through lobbying, advocacy, monitoring, and the continuous engagement with relevant stakeholders,"* Conteh said,

Joseph Brima, Assistant Representative for Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said the workshop provided a platform for stakeholders to come together and discuss issues of food and nutritious in the country.

The FAO Assistant Rep said they played a part for the right to food to be included into the constitution during the review process and supported the establishment of the Scaling up Nutrition Secretariat (SUN).

***“The right to food and nutrition is still a huge challenge in Sierra Leone. Successive governments haven’t been able to curb the situation. We have not been able to overcome the challenges, though we are able to get rice to feed ourselves,”*** he said

Country director Welt Hunger Hilfe, Ursula Lang Kamp, noted that her organization was committed to the right to food and strengthening food and nutrition at community level.

She emphasized that behavioural change is also important to overcome challenges of food and nutrition in the country. She added that it was necessary for people to cultivate cassava, fruits or plantain instead of the well-known staple food-rice.

Joseph Saffa, Research Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, noted in his presentation that the right to adequate food could only be realised when every woman, man and child put effort in growing what they eat. The Research and evaluation officer further said that food must be free from dangerous substances like chemicals that come from polluted water or soil, adding that food production, processing, packaging and storage must follow international standards.

## **CPS to Promote Social Cohesion in Sierra Leone**

The Sierra Leone chapter of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) Network will during this year’s International Peace Day celebration, promote social cohesion and tolerance in specific communities with high political tensions during the 2018 March 30 Elections.

It could be recalled that during the elections, some people who were supporting certain political parties where with forced to flee or left their communities own volition for safety. Even after the president election result was announced, political party supporters riotously took to street and even burnt down houses and a police station Kenema. Even though the elections are over, some people have still not returned to their original communities and those who did continue to live in fears.

It is on this note that the CPS wants to engage these communities to educate them on the need to continue to live amicably irrespective of people's political affiliations or belief. In two separate planning meetings held in June and July, 2018 CPS members unanimously agreed to look at social cohesion.



Therefore, the theme for this year's celebration is ***"Promoting Social Cohesion in Post elections Sierra Leone"***.

It is worth noting that the CPS network has as its yearly activities to celebrate the

international day of peace. The celebration is normally observed annually on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September with different activities implemented at regional levels and sometimes climaxed by a national event like the national symposium that was held last September in Freetown.

During the second planning meeting held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 at the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) in Freetown, adapted the theme what Goal sixteen (16) of the Sustainable Development Goals which focuses on promoting peace, justice and strong Prevention of injustices at schools or in our communities by adopting a non-violent approach to problem-solving.

During the celebration, communities will be identified at regional basis with members in those regions spearheading the celebration.

Members recollected that in the past elections, the Network contributed immensely to the peaceful elections even though there were few challenges.

*"We should therefore focus our attention to what we could do to sustain that peace, promote a peaceful co-existence in the society"* Manfred emphasized

This, she said is evident by the fact that many issues still continue to come up and it will be good that the network continue to preach peace with more emphasis on political inclusiveness;

## **MRU Youth Discuss Post Elections Developments in Sierra Leone and Liberia**



## By Consultant

After their successful elections, thirty six (36) youth working with organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia under the Civil Peace Service (CPS) Network met in Sierra Leone to interact and



exchange experiences on post elections developments presently unfolding in both countries.

These youth were brought together during the third edition of the Mano River Youth Exchange meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June and organized by the Sierra Leone chapter of CPS. The

event took place at the Pastoral Center in Kenema, Eastern Region of Sierra Leone. Participants for this event were drawn from the BFTW-CPS member organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

While addressing youth at the opening session, the lead Coordinator of CPS; Dr. Sheku Kamara said that amidst the many challenges they faced, youth from both countries played a pivotal role during the electioneering processes in both countries. He explained that before the elections



*Dr. Sheku Kamara addressing his audience at the opening segment of the occasion*

were conducted in both countries, CPS engaged youth in similar meetings wherein they were transformed into Peace Ambassadors that would take a lead role in promoting peace, tolerance in their countries during the elections. After the elections were over, the network thought it

fit to bring together youth to dialogue on post elections developments and not just to share experiences but also to reflect on the challenges and successes recorded during the Elections.

*“Seeing the competence and interest in our youth was among the reasons such a meeting was initiated. We believe that these kinds of engagements with youth will spur them up to keep that interest and keep the fire burning”* Dr. Kamara urged.

On her part, the Deputy Coordinator of CPS; Madam Adenike Cole said that the past meetings the network organized with youth have extensively looked at cross boarder elections issues. Now that the elections were over, the network will not direct it focus on elections but will look at other areas should there be another meetings in the future.

Speaking on behalf of Sierra Leone at the closing session, one of the participants; Koita Yusufu Aiah said that he was personally happy to have benefit from such an engagement. Aiah maintained all the issues discussed were of great essence to not just him but the rest of the participants and youth in the MRU countries at large. As a youth advocate, Aiah assured the organizers that whatever they had learnt will be shared with those who didn't have the opportunity of attending.

Similarly, James: S. Cooper from the Liberian said that the interactions between and among participants were remarkable and the experiences garnered were outstanding. As this was his first time to attend the MRU meeting, Cooper said that he was then convinced that Sierra Leone and Liberia have almost everything in common. He advised the organizers and sponsor of the event to look at social and economic empowerment of youths. *"We (youth) have power to change things but that will only be possible if we come together to address social issues plaguing us"* Cooper concluded.

During the meeting, issues like techniques for a responsible use of the special media, process involved and authorities concern with the conduct of elections and legal and regulatory framework on elections were discussed. The Program Manager for 'YMCA Queens Young leader project' at the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA); Joseph Aiah Kange and the Regional Trainer for the National Election Watch (NEW) who is also the Chairperson for the Civil Society Movement for the Eastern Region; Augustine A. Sannoh made very educative presentations on their role in the transformation of youth and the electioneering process of the country.

Highlighting some of the post elections scenarios in both countries, participants said that it was a remarkable thing for Sierra Leone and Liberia to get peaceful transfer of political powers from one government to the other. They disclosed that after the elections results were announced, there were tensions in both countries with houses and properties born burnt down. At the moment, there is a very high expectation from the governments by citizens in both countries.