



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY SIERRA LEONE



Issue 3

Newsletter

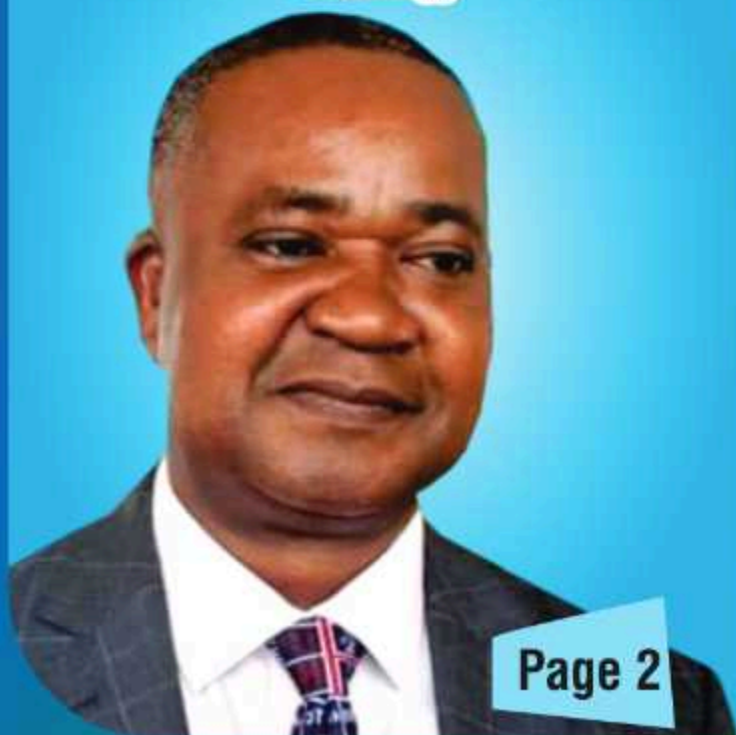
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Parliament enacts New EPASL Act to protect Sierra Leone's Environment

**By Amadu Lera Shaw,
IEC Officer**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on 16th June 2022 enacted the new Environment Protection Agency Act of 2021 after months of reviews and debates through different stages. The new 2021 EPA Act which will replace the 2008 and the amended 2010 Acts is an act to provide for the continuation of the Sierra Leone Environment Protection Agency, provide for more effective and efficient protection and management of the environment, and to provide for other related matters.

The Minister of the Environment, Professor Foday Moriba Jaward as the supervisory Minister played a key role in the enactment of the new EPA Act which seeks to strengthen environmental governance in Sierra Leone. Before the passing of the bill into law, the environment minister said that the bill is consistent with the 2063 African Agenda (the Africa we want) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

He called on Members of Parliament to review other existing environmental laws to establish greater environmental protection in the country. The Minister further reiterated that some important changes made to the new legislation included mechanisms to address issues of climate change and sustainable development. Other areas where changes were made included administration, increment of fines and penalties, and the power to prosecute environmental

crimes which were never captured in the EPA Act of 2008 and its 2010 amendment.

The new Act also introduces new provisions on integrated approaches to environmental governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, compliance and enforcement actions, build effective synergies in the implementation of Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), and enhances sustainable exploitation and use of natural resources. During the deliberation of the Bill, the Chairman of the Legislative Committee, Hon. Abdul Maray Conteh, said 'the House of Parliament has thoroughly reviewed the long-awaited Bill and passed a new Act which signifies a milestone in the protection of the environment and the fight against climate change'.

After many reviews and debates in the well of Parliament, the document is now set to be vetted by the Clerk and the Speaker of Parliament before it will be directed to the Government Printing and submitted to the President for his assent. The enactment of the new EPA Bill places the EPA in a better position to handle emerging environmental issues in the country to which the environment minister expressed thanks and appreciation to the Members of Parliament for their support in putting the right legal and institutional framework for the benefit of people and the planet.



The Minister of the Environment
Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward making a presentation
in Parliament

The ACC commended EPASL for securing highest score in implementing the National Anti-Corruption Strategy



Dr. Bondi Gevao
Executive Chairman EPASL

By Ishmael Kindama
Dumbuya, Senior Iec Officer

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) of Sierra Leone had commended the leadership and management of the Environment Protection Agency - Sierra Leone (EPASL) for what it calls a 'significant compliance' in the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) in the country. This was communicated after conducting quarterly monitoring report to ascertain the progress and level of compliance by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the implementation of the NACS action plan.

In a letter dated 2nd February 2022 and addressed to the Executive Chairman of the EPASL, the ACC Commissioner noted that based on the 'compliance barometer tool used to determine the level of compliance of MDAs, using a score of 0-100, the Environment Protection Agency scored 85% which falls within the significant compliance score'. The ACC further noted that as one of the six institutions to have attained this score, it represented a great leap for which the Commission acknowledged the effort of the Integrity Management Committee as well as management and staff of the Environment Protection Agency.

The current 2019-2023 NACS, is the fourth generation of NACS implemented in Sierra Leone under the auspices of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy Secretariat. The Strategy is primarily geared towards assessing the level of compliance in the implementation of action plans by MDAs and local councils. The 2019-2023 NACS is designed to point out two critical success

factors, to wit, bench marking institutional specific action plans and corruption control measures within MDAs and Councils.

The EPASL's Internal Anti-Corruption Strategy aims to mainstreaming corruption prevention procedures and eradicate practices detrimental to the day-to-day operations of the Agency. The strategy was signed in March 2020 between the EPASL and the ACC to provide meaningful support to the ACC of Sierra Leone in the implementation of the fourth generation of the anti-corruption strategy (2019-2023). Its objective is to regularly track the operations of each department in the implementation of the standard operating procedures and provide regular assessments on compliance practices and enforcement procedures by members of staff of the Agency relative to the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, the National Public Procurement Act, the Finance Act and other related financial, administrative and procurement regulatory legislations in place in Sierra Leone.

It could be recalled that in 2020, the EPASL through the Compliance department developed the internal anti-corruption strategy and invited the ACC for inputs. The Commissioner, Francis Ben Kaifala Esq. was impressed to have discovered that the EPASL was the only institution at that time that had carved an internal anti-corruption strategy from the national anti-corruption strategy in line with the ACC's fight against corruption in the country.

This was not the first time the ACC Commissioner has commended the EPASL. During the signing ceremony in 2020, Francis Ben Kaifala said most times, as an anti-graft fighting body, they had to run after institutions to do the right thing but "what the EPASL is doing epitomizes what it means to own the fight against corruption in the country where they are inviting us to come and work with them on integrity issues at the Agency" adding that what the EPA-SL had done was extremely exemplary.



**STATEMENT OF THE HON. MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT,
PROF. FODAY MORIBA JAWARD MARKING
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY - JUNE 5, 2022**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sunday 5th June 2022 marks World Environment Day. A day set aside by the United Nations Organization to remind us about our relationship with nature and our responsibility toward its preservation. It is a day that is meant to increase global awareness about the state of our environment and the need to conserve the natural resources on which we all depend. This day is celebrated globally, and as an integral part of the community of nations, we join the world once again in raising our voices and sending the message that the sustainability of life on planet earth is contingent upon how well we manage our environment.

This year's world environment day is celebrated under the theme "Only One Earth". It is a theme that triggers transformation through policies and programs to support cleaner and greener lifestyles. This important theme also calls upon us to redefine our relationship with the only planet we call home. The triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution and how we should address these issues going forward is critical.

Our relationship with nature should be defined not only by the benefits that we derive from its resources, but also involves our ability to relate well with plants, animals, and other vital components that constitute the bulk of our ecosystem. Caring for our ecosystem contributes to clean air, clean water, and fertile soil, which are essential ingredients that sustain human and animal health. As humans, therefore, our preoccupation must not only be confined to how we take from Mother Nature but also how we give back.

The need for a sustainable co-existence between humans, plants, and animals accounts for the establishment of the One Health platform which is a partnership that constitutes the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Environment Protection Agency. The principal aim of this partnership is to enhance a peaceful relationship between humans and nature.

Even as we celebrate this day, we are reminded of the many ways in which we have impacted our environment and the catastrophic effects of these impacts around the globe. The illegal logging of trees, pollution of watercourses, improper disposal of waste, sand mining, depletion of wetlands and water catchment areas, wildfires, indiscriminate construction of buildings in environmentally sensitive



areas, misuse of chemicals, marine litter, and noise pollution are among the major drivers that destroy our environment.

World Environment Day, therefore, enjoins us to strengthen our resilience to the consequences of environmental destruction emanating from our harmful practices.

Overcoming many of our environmental challenges requires political will, which has been manifested severally by His Excellency, the President Ret. Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio including the establishment of a new stand-alone Ministry of the Environment. The core mandate of the Ministry is to lead the development and supervision of the legal and policy frameworks for building national environmental resilience as it relates to climate change, and natural resource management, including forestry and wetlands conservation. The Ministry also supervises government agencies addressing different environmental issues in the country. Among the key achievements of the Ministry are:

1. We have rolled out a National Tree Planting Project to plant 5m trees by 2024. 1.2m trees are already planted in both in-land and coastal degraded areas across the country, with 1.6 million trees set to be planted this year.
2. We have developed a National Development-Induced Resettlement Policy. The bill is now in parliament for enactment as an Act.
3. To enhance enforcement of legislations/policies, we have established a climate change secretariat within the Ministry of the Environment and submitted a holistic NDC to UNFCCC and a National Adaptation Plan. Our National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans have also been reviewed. We are currently reviewing all the major national environmental legal instruments. These include laws to mandate the inclusion of environmental safeguards into an Environmental, Social, and Health Impact Assessment study before implementing all developmental projects with an appreciable environmental footprint. We

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Consultations on the development of the Nationally Determined Contributions Implementation and Financing Plan

By Fomba Sheriff, Charles Lebbie, and Sallie Conteh

On the 1st July 2022, the Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone ended regional stakeholder consultation on the development of the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) implementation plan, in Bo southern region. Similar consultations were also held in Port Loko, Makeni, Kenema, and Freetown. The essence of these engagements was to seek the input of relevant stakeholders for the development of the NDC document to address the negative impacts of climate change across the country.

Sierra Leone is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as well as the Paris Climate Agreement which obliged a party to develop national strategies to address both climate change mitigation and adaptation plans. Articles 3 and 4 of the Paris Climate Agreement requires each party must prepare, communicate and implement their nationally determined contributions to address climate change. The NDC shall pursue domestic mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce emission levels of greenhouse gases and cope with the negative impacts of climate change. Sierra Leone developed its first NDC in 2015 and reviewed and updated it

in 2021 indicating the country's commitment to the fight against climate change.

To make the implementation of the NDC more robust, the Environment Protection Agency engaged the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the government in the development of the NDC implementation and financing plan. The development of this document will guide the NDC implementation, enhance effective communication mechanisms, and also set the stage for the mainstreaming of climate change issues into sector-specific policies, programmes, projects, and overall operations. This will not only enhance climate resiliency but ensure that mitigation and adaptation mechanisms are considered by all relevant stakeholders thereby ensuring sustainable environmental management.

During the engagement with the relevant stakeholders, the Acting Deputy Director of Climate Change Tamba Emmanuel Nyaka said Climate Change was a reality, not a fiction, as its impacts are visible and affecting everyone, society, and the environment, as we are witnessing ecosystems disintegrating, coastal communities shrinking; fluctuation in weather patterns affecting agriculture and food security, extreme events leading to floods and prolonged dry period among others.

He, therefore, called on all institutions to have a climate-smart lens when developing their

policies, programmes, and projects. He said climate issues are cross-cutting and intersectoral and required an intersectoral approach to address holistically.

He concluded by saying, the bringing together of all relevant stakeholders in developing the NDC implementation plan not only shows the country's commitment to its obligation but also prepared the pathway for a climate resilience future for the country.

The Paramount Chief of Tikonko Chiefdom, Bo District, Hon. Kangbai Makavory appreciated the efforts of the Agency for taking the lead in ensuring sustainable environmental management. When he was growing up as a boy, the issues of climate change were almost non-existent to Hon. Makavory.

However, human activities have altered the natural environment which is causing global warming and climate change that is impacting all sectors and all areas of the country.

He said the need to increase awareness on issues of climate change and the environment is of paramount importance.

This he said is very key especially because the majority of the population is illiterate. He called on everyone to work together to protect the environment for the good of all.

Participants were drawn from MDAs, Civil Society, the Media, and Local Authorities and also made their input into the document.



Why Sierra Leoneans must embrace commendable efforts towards curbing rampant pollution and destruction of riverbeds and their rich resources



August 2020, the Executive Chairman of the Environmental Protection Agency, Dr. Bondi Gevao conducted a monitoring of illegal gold mining activities along the Pampana River, Northern Sierra Leone and showing dislike of what he was seeing

**By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya
Senior IEC Officer**

Wandering through a vehicle along major rivers of Sierra Leone in the north, North-West, south and eastern regions, one is perturbed by many anthropogenic or human-induced activities on the motherland. And you would surely miss out the lustrous naturally endowed and overflowing whirls of fresh waters that were once admirable when one crosses these streams of fulfilling natural beauty and ecological endowments.

Decades ago, before the concentration of unsustainable artisanal gold mining activities along our river beds, the fresh whirls of these waters in these naturally flowing streams such as the River Pampana in the North, the Sewa and Jong Rivers in the East in addition to a host of other rivers and streams seem like a shadow of glory for the present and future generations. Today, all these natural sceneries and precious resources such as water are being altered and depleted as a result of man's insatiable quest for natural resources found underneath these riverbeds including gold and diamonds through unsustainable mining practices.

Unfortunately, these unsustainable mining practices in our riverbeds and

riverbanks are not only being carried out by Sierra Leoneans alone but also by foreign nationals. These foreign nationals being the beneficiaries of these acts of destruction of our natural resources and nature prefer to violate our mining and environmental laws with impunity with the connivance of few Sierra Leoneans and return back to their home countries.

Staff of the Environment Protection Agency have witnessed multiple times during regular field operations and monitoring activities where some local communities would provide shelter and protection for foreigners of countries like Ghana, China, Ivory Coast and Liberia from being arrested and prosecuted by law enforcement officers. Staff have also encountered serious confrontations from these community people who would rather instigate violence and pelt stones on government officers and use abusive language against them for simply ensuring sustainable exploitation of natural resources and preventing degradation of the environment and its attendant consequences. What is worth noting is that the protection of Sierra Leone's natural resources and the environment in general is guaranteed and sanctioned by law which every Sierra Leonean or residents of the country must comply with. The Environment Protection Agency of Sierra Leone (EPA is the main government agency responsible for the

protection and management of the environment. The Agency also plays a key role in conducting investigations on environmental issues and advises the government of Sierra Leone as stipulated in section 12(k) of the EPA Act of 2008. The 2008 Act also makes it an offence for any person to prevent an authorized officer to perform his lawful functions.

River pollution, especially with the use of dredges, other polluting mining equipment and chemical substances such as mercury and hydrocarbons, is a major issue affecting local communities across Sierra Leone. Most of the residents in areas such as the Pampana River, Moa River, Great and Little Scarcies among others complain of the wanton destruction of their sources of drinking waters in the streams as a result of unsustainable artisanal mining activities using dredges and other water polluting equipment thereby posing serious and eminent threats to lives both on land and below water and depriving communities of much needed water for drinking, cooking and other domestic uses.

The Government has made great efforts to address this menace. In the Presidential Brief of 7th June 2021, His Excellency the President and Chairman of the National Security Council issued a policy directive to the security sector to stem the ongoing pollution of the major water bodies as a result of mining activities

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Assistant Director, Field Operations, Aiah Werie Kembay on field operation

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along and in river beds across the country. After the issuance of the Presidential Policy Directive, a committee consisting the EPASL was setup to carry out the President's directive to stem the pollution of waters across the country.

The committee was charged, among other things, with the responsibility of conducting joint monitoring exercises and raids along polluted rivers and destroy all dredges and other water polluting mining equipment found along and on river beds. Since its establishment in 2021, the Committee through the leadership of the EPASL, has destroyed more than two hundred (200) dredges found within and around our riverbeds and our riverbanks across the country.

As patriotic citizens who care about the present and future of their country, all Sierra Leoneans, particularly those living in riverine communities, must endeavor to protect the riverbanks and riverbeds to secure a sustainable future for all which is the key objective the Environmental Protection Agency is working tirelessly to achieve.

According to a report published in April 2020 by the Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone on the national action plan for reducing mercury use in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector in Sierra Leone, it is emphasized that "in rivers where dredges are used, such as in the small-scale gold mining operations in the Tayei and Pampana Rivers, the flows of river systems are disrupted by the excavation of soils and the dumping of mine tailings".

The report further pinpoints that artisanal gold mining also 'affects drinking water that nearby communities and farmers' cattle may rely on, which may further exacerbate the risk of cholera, an important health risk in many of Sierra Leone's rural communities.

The threats to our waterbodies and riverbanks as a result of artisanal mining of gold are not only unique to Sierra Leone. Elsewhere, a 2021 Dartmouth study published by the National Academy of Sciences finds out that "artisanal-scale gold mining is altering water clarity and dynamics in the Madre de Dios River watershed in Peru, a tropical biodiversity hotspot. Higher levels of suspended sediment were found in rivers near the mining sites, with increasing impacts as mining has become more widespread in the past two decades.

The elevated sediment levels contain mercury and other contaminants, which can pose health risks to humans and have a detrimental impact on fish populations and other aquatic life. In Ghana for instance, according to a 2021 report also published by the Earth Observatory, about 35 percent of Ghana's land is extracted/disturbed through "small-scale mining, many of which operate informally or without a valid license". Comparatively, this act of operating illegally or sneaking to villages with the guise of providing low paid and unsustainable jobs for locals could also be associated with what is happening here in Sierra Leone.

For the past few months since the operation was launched by the EPASL and the other key government partners, positive milestones have been achieved. For instance, the operation has enhanced the massive reduction of the rampant pollution of our river beds during the search for gold and it has also succeeded in reducing a substantial number of illicit mining activities that were being carried out on our rivers that were once the sights of naturally flowing fresh water with rich marine biodiversity.

Notably, and as a key mandate of the presidential directive and an outcome of the committee since its establishment in 2021, the operations have contributed to the destruction of more than 200 dredges that were found on sight within and around the riverbeds. This

success story was achieved as a result of the strong and effective collaboration between the Security Sector and the Environmental Protection leading to greater protection of the country's natural resources including the protection of key protected areas around the country. The monitoring operation had also increased the local partnership between the Agency and the traditional leaders and heads of various communities along and within the major rivers across the country as these traditional leaders play a vital and key role towards the protection of Sierra Leone's natural resources.

Notwithstanding the huge financial resources, the Agency has expended into the monitoring operations for the prevention of pollution of the country's biodiversity rich rivers, the EPASL had also succeeded in generating income for the state out of the fines received from culprits and those caught on sight. Aside this financial benefit to the state, the monitoring operations had also reduced the large number of foreign miners that were undertaking illegal and unsustainable mining activities through a number of arrests, investigations and prosecution of foreign nationals across the Sierra Leone through the assistance of the Agency's environmental compliance and law enforcement department.

Conclusively, evidences have suggested that efforts to stem out river pollution being largely championed by the EPASL should be a continuous and sustained process which the head of the Agency in the person of Dr. Bondi Gevao (Executive Chairman), has vowed and pledged to support at all times as long as he is the head of the environmental protection agency. In his determination to end these mining practices that have adverse effects on the people, the planet and national prosperity, Dr. Gevao had recently said that 'if the illegal miners don't stop, the EPASL is not going to stop'.

However, as Sierra Leoneans, we must at all times embrace all efforts especially these efforts from the Environmental Protection Agency that are geared towards curbing the rampant pollution and the destruction of our precious rivers and their rich resources across the country. In addition to all these efforts, the Environmental Protection Agency is looking forward towards cleaner and fresh flowing whirls of streams from these once naturally flowing rivers so that the present and future generations of our motherland would continue to enjoy a taste of beauty and natural bliss.

The National Adaptation Plan and submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya
& Mbalu Sheriff

The government of Sierra Leone would like to notify the general public and the international community that on February 2022, through the National Focal Point for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), have submitted the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to the UNFCCC's Secretariat. The submission of the NAP follows the launching by Minister of the Environment, Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward in the presence of key government officials and local community representatives at the Sierra Bay Hotel in Freetown. The NAP is a continuous, progressive, and iterative process that follows a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory, and fully transparent approach. The objectives of the Sierra Leone NAP process are; to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience; and to facilitate the integration of climate change adaptation, in a coherent manner, into relevant new and existing policies, programs and activities, in particular development planning processes and strategies, within all relevant sectors and at different levels, as appropriate. In 2021, the Climate Change Secretariat at the Environmental Protection Agency together with partners developed the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) document, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the National Climate Change and Strategic Action Plan (NCCSAP) all with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Sierra Leone is vulnerable to the impact of climate change and it has adverse impacts on Sierra



(L-R) Minister of the Environment, EPASL Executive Chairman & Chairman Parliamentary Committee on the environment after launching the National Adaptation Plan document

Leone's economic development and poses a fundamental threat to the realization of the Medium-Term National Development Plan from 2019-2023.

The NAP process was established under the UNFCCC in 2010 as part of the Cancun Adaptation Framework. The document serves as Sierra Leone's initial NAP to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The NAP enables Parties to the UNFCCC to formulate and implement NAPs as a means of identifying medium- and long-term adaptation needs and for developing and implementing strategies and programmes to address those needs.

"This document is an integral component of the updated nationally determined contribution (NDC) of Sierra Leone which indicate our commitment to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement" said Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward, Minister of the Environment. "It will further help identify and address key adaptation issues, gaps, priorities, and resource requirements for more effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation in support

of the NDC and the Paris Agreement".

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) views its NAP as a process to ensure a systematic and strategic approach to climate change adaptation in all government decision making, which will facilitate institutional coordination, resource mobilization, technology transfer and, ultimately, effective adaptation actions.

The document is, therefore, a step forward in building a more resilient Sierra Leone. Ultimately, the vision of Sierra Leone's NAP is to reduce vulnerability by half by 2030 through increased risk awareness, improvements in rule compliance, increased institutional capacity and an integrated gender-responsive approach to adaptation in the development of policies and programmes across sectors and scales.

The document has been developed by the Government of Sierra Leone through the Environment Protection Agency with strong collaboration with the Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency and a broad-based consultative process and participation of other relevant stakeholders and the private sectors under the supervision of the Ministry of the Environment.

Environment Minister Participates in a high-level meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and Environmental Affairs

By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya,
Senior lec Officer

The Minister of the Environment, Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward participated in a high-level meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and environmental affairs during the side-lines of the 66th Commission on the Status of Women CSW held at the conference hall of the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations, New York, USA on the 18th March 2022. During the high-level meeting, the environment minister gave an update on what Sierra Leone had achieved so far in terms of women's participation in environmental, climate change, and disaster risk management in and outside of the country. He briefed his colleague ECOWAS Ministers on the collaboration between the newly established Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Gender Affairs about solving environmental issues in the country. The theme for the side-line is central to climate change, and environmental disaster risk reduction in West Africa: Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are at the heart of solutions. The objectives were to; review and adopt the draft



roadmap for the implementation of the ECOWAS outcome document on Gender, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction in the West Africa region; identify potential partners likely to finance the implementation of the ECOWAS Roadmap on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction in the West Africa region; and obtain the commitment of the Ministers in charge of Gender and Women Affairs and the environment to implement the roadmap in the ECOWAS Member States. The interactive session was attended by participants consisting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and the environment, Gender

Experts, Civil Society Organisations, and International, Regional, and Sub-regional Institutions working on Gender, Women's Empowerment, and Climate Change.

Accompany by the Minister of the Environment was the Minister of Gender Affairs, Hon. Manti Tarawali, a gender, and climate change expert as well, Mrs. Lovetta Yatta Juanah, Assistant Director of Climate Change for Mitigation, and the Assistant Director for Human Resources, Ms Magdalene Bio all from the Environment Protection Agency of Sierra Leone.



RELIGIOUS LEADERS COMMIT TO CURB NOISE POLLUTION IN COMMUNITIES

**By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya,
Senior IEC Officer**

The use of loud sound/speakers in communities especially from places of worship and entertainment centers is becoming a problem for residents and people with health-related issues in these communities. The entertainment industry and religious people use loud Public Address systems in their entertainment centers and places of worship to communicate or send their messages thereby disrupting those nearby.

Some of the Churches in residential areas use loud speakers in community centers for revivals late at night when some people may be sleeping. Those who are disrupted by the loud speakers cannot get good rest or sleep thereby unable to give the best output on the following day.

There have been continuous complaints directed to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Members of Parliament regarding this growing noise pollution for necessary actions. In response, the EPA-SL sought the attention of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC-SL) to remedy the situation.

On Thursday 10th February 2022 during a consultative meeting held at the New Freetown City Hall, the leadership of the



Environmental Protection Agency engaged the members of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone comprising both representatives from the Islamic and Christian communities to discuss this critical issue. The EPASL as the regulator for sound environmental practices in Sierra Leone wants to ensure that activities that pose threat to the health and wellbeing of the general populace such as noise pollution are addressed accordingly without being regarded as a deterrent to development.

The Executive Chairman of the Environment Protection Agency, Dr. Bondi Gevao admonished the membership of the IRCSL on the issue and pleaded with them to find amicable solutions that would address the issue of loud noise in the communities.

The health impact of loud sounds also referred to as noise pollution in connection with the standards set by the World Health Organization as well as other legalities were

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Rev. Jessie Fornah making a statement during a consultative meeting for religious council representatives held at the New Freetown City Hall

RELIGIOUS LEADERS COMMIT TO CURB NOISE POLLUTION IN COMMUNITIES



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adequately deliberated during the one-day engagement meeting. The Deputy Director of Environmental Health and Safety, Mr. Mobash Idriss made a vivid presentation on the health impact of loud noise beyond acceptable standards of the WHO.

Speaker after speaker thanked the Agency for the initiative of mobilizing members of the inter-religious council to address the issue of loud sounds in the communities. Reverend Tamba Charles, President of the IRCSL said 'noise pollution is an issue that is of great concern to us' and he also admitted that they have been receiving the same complaints from members of the public on how best they can reduce the said noise.

Everyone is a victim of noise pollution. The membership of the IRC criticized the loud noise used by some of their members in the residential areas and made a promise of helping the EPASL by sending messages on the health impact of noise pollution. Key recommendations with support of the EPA's decision were discussed and would be implemented in due course.



IRC SL Representatives



IRC SL Representatives

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN SELECTED TO SERVE AS A MEMBER OF THE PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Executive Chairman of the Environment Protection Agency of Sierra Leone, Dr. Bondi Gevao had been appointed as a member of the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC) during meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions held at the Geneva International Conference Centre in Switzerland from the 6-17th June 2022.

The theme of this year's meeting was "Global Agreements for a Healthy Planet: Sound management of chemicals and waste". The Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC) is a subsidiary body of the Stockholm Convention established for reviewing chemicals proposed for listing in Annex A, Annex B, and/or Annex C.

The Committee is established under paragraph 6 of Article 19 of the Convention. It is a 31-member expert committee tasked with reviewing proposals submitted by a party for listing a new substance under the Stockholm Convention.

Given his rich academic background and international expertise in the field of chemistry and environmental protection and management, Dr. Bondi Gevao possesses a wealth of experience which he is presently manifesting as head of the Environment Protection Agency of Sierra Leone.

Dr. Gevao is a proud holder of a Ph.D. in Environmental Science from the University of Lancaster, United Kingdom; an MSc in Environmental and Ecological Sciences, Lancaster University, and a BSc (Hons) in Chemistry, University of Sierra Leone. He is an environmental organic chemist with expertise in several analytical techniques for measuring contaminants in the environment at trace levels.

In 2003 Dr. Gevao joined the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) where he served as senior research scientist steering research to provide scientific evidence for assessing the effectiveness of international efforts to minimize the release of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the West Asian environment.

Furthermore, Dr. Gevao spearheaded research that culminated in KISR being selected by the Conference of Parties (COP) to the Stockholm Convention to serve as one of twelve regional centers for capacity-building and the transfer of technology in 2009. In the past, he has co-chaired the session on "Persistent Organic Pollutants in the Developing World" at a very important annual conference on "Halogenated Persistent Pollutants" since 2015.

With his many years of experience in the chemicals of environmental concern, Dr. Bondi's selection into the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee was welcomed and received with the greatest pleasure at home, especially by his staff at the Agency.



A new Discovery of Seagrass Location in Turtle Island, Southern Sierra Leone

**By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya,
Senior Iec Officer**

The National Implementing Team (NIT) for the Seagrass project in Sierra Leone comprising representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Institute of Marine Biology and Oceanography (IMBO), the Sierra Leone Navy as well as the ResilienSEA/GRID-Arendal Consultant, Professor Salomao Bandeira from Mozambique have recently on the 25th March 2022 discovered a new location of seagrass in the Seh Community, part of the Turtle Islands in Southern Sierra Leone.

The new seagrass location in Sierra Leone is the third seagrass discovery in the country since 2019, after Bumpetoke and Mania islands. This is also an important discovery since the seven West African states (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania and Cape Verde) started documenting and monitoring seagrasses in the region with funding from the GRID-Arendal under the ResilienSEA project.

The Team took coordinates of the new site at Seh Island and proceeded with documentation of ecological monitoring parameters such as seagrass cover, shoot number, leaf height as well as seagrass area estimates. The average length of the new-found ranges from 9 - 11cm and covers a wide area of more than a quarter km. Similar process occurred at Bumpetoke, larger area, but with spacer continuous seagrass meadows. Seh has thriving seagrass meadows, is a picture model for seagrass training and community engagement for Sierra Leone but this place is highly threatened due to boat and trampling activities as well as plastic pollution.

"This is an impressive discovery which sends a clear message that with more efforts and monitoring in new locations, we will discover more seagrass in Sierra Leone" said Paul A. Lamin, Project Coordinator and Deputy Director Natural Resources Management at the Environment Protection Agency of Sierra Leone. "This new discovery by Sierra Leone

will better place the country in the right position in the world map of seagrass" said Salomao Bandeira, from the GRID-Arendal.

Seagrasses are marine flowering plants found in shallow marine waters and in estuaries across the country. Together with mangrove forests, which are abundant across the Sierra Leone estuaries, seagrass are key marine habitats that sustain fisheries and charismatic fauna, such as sea turtles, provide coastal protection, sequester carbon therefore reducing climate change, oxygenate the ocean making it clean without pathogens, and buffer ocean acidification.

In order to leave in marine environment, the seagrass themselves had to acquire adaptations such as (i) processing vertical stems with grass-like green leaves, interconnected with horizontal stems called rhizomes with roots providing necessary anchorage in the sea; (ii) adapt to uptake nutrients both from roots (common in all plants) but also from leaves; (iii) having a hydrophilous pollination; (iv) possession of air-lacunnae in order to have the leaves to stand vertically in the water.

Within Sierra Leone, despite being only one seagrass species *Halodule wrightii*, there is habitat complexity enhancing the diversity and abundance of fauna observed within this expedition: fish, clams and other invertebrates. Sizable fish observed at

the shallow water appeared significant in both Seh and Bumpetuk Islands. Expeditions members had the opportunity to learn about dangerous or need-care animals such as stingrays and sea snakes.

The Turtle Island lies in the south-eastern province of Sierra Leone. Its location is part of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) of Sherbro River estuary. The mission's terms included discussion and assessment of ecosystem services as well as brainstorming on options to incorporate seagrass into national governance systems.

After the new seagrass meadow discovery, the team carried out informal community consultation about the value and importance of seagrass meadows, to the community themselves, as well as carried an open discussion on issues such on community engagement on seagrass conservation, building of a forum/network on seagrasses of both Seh and other sites within the Turtle Island archipelago. NIT, already a multi-actor forum will continue to monitor the progress of the seagrass comparing to its present status.

However, as the seagrass discoveries continue to unfold in Sierra Leone shiny waters, communities are on the high alert to put their wheels on motion to design protective measures that would see the protection of the marine grass.



Member of the National Implementation Team (NIT) searching for seagrass in Sei

Strengthening Environmental Education among School Pupils in Kenema



Mainstreaming environmental education among school going pupils in Kenema

By Charles Lebbie Jr,
IEC Officer Kenema

Mainstreaming environmental education and raising the awareness of pupils and students of learning institutions on environmental issues are key to achieving the environmental dimension of the sustainable development goals. This will lead to building a critical mass of young people with the relevant knowledge and inspiration to take action to protect environment and minimize the impacts of climate change on people and their communities. To develop this critical mass of young people, the Environment Protection Agency's Eastern Regional Office in Kenema engaged Teachers and Pupils of the United Brethren Church's Henrietta Secondary School and the Eastern Technical University in Kenema. The engagements culminated in the establishment of school nature clubs in the two institutions. This was in addition to the school nature clubs earlier established in Kenema and Kailahun Districts respectively. It is hoped that regular engagements of pupils and students will motivate them to take action to address the numerous environmental challenges in their schools and communities and take action to address climate change and its impacts. This is in response to catching them

young and preparing them to be sensitive to environmental issues.

During the engagement, the Legal Affairs, Compliance and Enforcement Manager, Mr. Gibrilla Kamara, informed pupils and teachers about the importance of trees in the communities, the significance of the ecosystems and their services they provide and the need to effectively manage the wastes humans generate to save the planet. While educating the pupils, he told them to inculcate the culture of planting and maintaining trees as they can provide many services to humans including clean air, wind breakers, food and shade, carbon storage, and providing raw materials to service the

Continued page 14



Strengthening Environmental Education among School Pupils in Kenema

manufacturing industry that provides equipment and tools used in homes, schools and communities. He also noted that trees prevent soil erosion and preserve water catchments which serve as sources of water for people, animal, plants and microorganisms.

The Environment Officer at the regional office, Mr. Mohamed N. Kanneh, also affirmed that he believes that students at Eastern Technical University are environmental ambassadors that will help raise awareness in our various societies. He, therefore, stated that the main purpose of the engagement was to officially launch the environmental nature club which geared towards environmental education and awareness raising for effective management and protection of the environment.

The Regional Manager, Mr Abdul Bah, on behalf of the Board, Management, the Executive Chairperson and staff of the Environment Protection Agency informed the audience about the mandate of protecting and sustainably

managing the environment. He elaborated on the importance of nature clubs and expectations from members of the school's nature clubs.

Mr. Bah noted that student who are part of the nature clubs can make use of environmental education to promote awareness and undertake activities such as community trash pickup day, tree planting, flood mitigation and adaptation campaigns, and climate change crusades to make their communities resilient, safe and sustainable. Environmental nature clubs can influence community climate actions through educating pupils, students, and community stakeholders about environmental degradation, climate change and its impacts on development and communities, and the need to take concrete actions to mitigate and adapt to its negative effects. He furthered that the present and future belong to youths, including students, and they must be seen to take active and meaningful role to shape their perceptions.

Pupils, students and other participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments about the essence of the establishment of the nature clubs and the donation of seedlings and tree planting on strategic sites within the campus. The occasions were climaxed by symbolic tree planting on the respective campuses for the restoration of nurture.



Integrating the NDC, the NAP, and the NCCSAP into Districts' Development Plans and Programs



Integrating the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and the National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (NCCSAP) into Districts' Development Plans and Programs is a key step towards adapting to Climate Change and it induced risk in Sierra Leone.

On June, 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone organized an intensive training for Local and District Councils across the country. The trainings were held in Port Loko, Moyamba, Bonthe as well as in the Western Rural District with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sierra Leone.

The objective of the trainings was to develop the capacity of the Council technical staff to identify and develop project ideas and opportunities from the priorities in the NAP, the NDC, and the NCCSAP into district-level planning processes, development plans, and programs.

Also, the training was to provide practical, step-by-step guidance on how the local council and other actors at the district level can mainstream the NAP, the NDC, and the NCCSAP into their District Development planning and programs as part of the national mainstreaming efforts inline with the 2004 Local Government Act, and to similarly recognize the role played by the Local Councils and other authorities at the district level in advancing adaptation to climate change, the engagement with the four council was to guide and strengthened the local council's full participation in National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes including its implementation.

The Assistant Director Natural Resources Management department, Joseph Sapunka Turay said "it is expected that at the end of the training, we would have transformed the local councils, armed them with development plans that link the National Development plans, the NAP, and NDC frameworks as well as revamp them with the ability to

mainstream climate change adaptation into their development planning processes".

"In July 2017, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), through the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) funded a Project entitled "Adapting to Climate Change Induced Coastal Risks Management in Sierra Leone. This project aims at strengthening the ability of coastal communities to systematically manage climate change risks and impacts on physical infrastructures and economic livelihoods" said Tamba Emmanuel Nyaka, Deputy Director, Climate Change Secretariat at the EPA-SL. However, in the framework of implementing the UNDP Coastal risk project, there are three major national climate change roadmap documents whose implementation can contribute to the overall goal of the coastal risk project.

The NDC aimed at reducing Sierra Leone's emissions by 25% in 2050 (NDC,2021) and to build resilience of the people as a result of climate change. To achieve the 2050 emission reduction target as specify in the Sierra Leone's NDC, priorities actions were stated that gear towards reducing GHG emission and to build our resilience to the impact of Climate change. The plans specify how to achieve the goals and include complex mechanisms for monitoring and verifying progress to ensure that they are met.

The National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan also serves as the Sierra Leone National Climate Change Roadmap, identifying adaptation and mitigation measures in key sectors such as energy and transportation, agriculture (crop and livestock), fisheries and marine life, tourism, water resources, health and sanitation, and land-use change and forestry.

Participants during the training appreciated the work of the EPASL especially when it's now common for local councils to able to cascade environmental issues into their development plans.



Participates on a training for Local and District Councils



LANCASTER UNIVERSITY UK OFFERS MENTORSHIP TO EPA STAFF



**By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya,
Senior IEC Officer**

Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward and Dr. Bondi Gevaio are fellows of the Lancaster University in the United Kingdom who made valuable contributions during their studies this University. During their visit in November to the UK for the 26th Climate Change Conference, they used the opportunity to visit their alma mater to lobby and advocate the need for capacity building and collaboration between the University and the Ministry of the Environment including the Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone, EPA-SL.

Following their return from the United Nations Conference, a team of professionals from the Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University visited Sierra Leone to engage with the Ministry of Environment, the EPA-SL and other stakeholders.

The Professor of Environmental Microbiology and Director of International Engagement who doubles as head of the Lancaster Environment Centre, (Prof Kirk T. Semple) in a meeting held on Wednesday 20th July 2022, at the EPA conference hall, gave an overview of the University and implore the staff of the Agency on how best Sierra Leoneans can access and benefit from environmental capacity building opportunities provided by the center.

Another, key discussion point with the EPASL leadership and management was the offer of intensive mentorship in leadership and the project development environmental. Enhancing collaboration and the development of joint projects around environmental management and climate change-related issues in the country.

The senior lecturers in the persons of Prof Kirk T. Semple and Dr. Akanimo Odon also had fruitful discussions with a cross-section of other entities of the Ministry of the Environment after a high-level meeting with the Minister of Technical and Higher Education and heads of different Sierra Leonean Universities with career enhancement sessions across the country.

The Africa Strategy Adviser at the Lancaster Environment Centre, Dr. Akanimo Odon also took staff through internationalization and Resource Mobilization including how the staff of the Agency can benefit from careers, research, and funding opportunities provided by the Lancaster University. He used his mentoring skills to take staff through the funding opportunities and strategies on how to secure such fundings.

Prof Kirk T. Semple and Dr. Akanimo Odon also had a high-level meeting with the Minister of the Environment. Key issues towards fostering collaboration and building capacities of staff were emphasized by the environment minister and the Executive Chairman of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Also, the team engaged the Minister of Technical and Higher



Education and heads of different Sierra Leonean Universities in career assessment sessions and opportunities in the country.

Warm hospitality was accorded to the visiting team from the Lancaster University by the Minister of the Environment, Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward and the Executive Chairman of the Environmental Protection Agency, Dr. Bondi Gevaio.

Promoting Community Participation and ownership of tree planting during World Environment Day 2022



Rural Women planting trees



Local participation and ownership of tree planting initiatives is a key driver towards combating Climate Change or cooling down the earth's atmosphere. To enhance community involvement and ownership in local adaptation practices, during this year's World Environment Day, we organized a tree planting activity at the newly constructed Magbele Bridge, Koya Chiefdom, North-Western Sierra Leone.

The local community involving Chiefs, youths, women and children joyously came out in their numbers in the two villages bordering the bridge and fully participated in the tree planting with more than five hundred trees planted on that day. To the community people, it was an experience and an exercise worth undertaken as they believe if they cannot do it no one else can do it for them.

The objective of planting the trees is to ensure local community is involve in climate change adaptation and as well help to protect the newly constructed bridge from any potential damage due to soil erosion among others.

Holding the nursery and walking towards the direction of the already dug holes, Adama Yillah emphasized that "when the dangers occur due to the impact of climate change, it's the community people especially we the women and children that are going to suffer the most and so it's our responsibility to participate and own this tree planting initiative in our community".

Promoting Community Participation and ownership of tree planting during World Environment Day 2022



IMPACTS OF ILLEGAL MINING ACTIVITIES: THREAT TO WATER SECURITY, HUMAN HEALTH, AND POTENTIAL NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY



By Fomba Sheriff IEC Officer

The availability of abundant natural resources in a country is considered to be a blessing by many because of the potential to change the destiny of a country for the better if managed well. Sierra Leone as a country has a huge deposit of mineral resources; whether it has benefited the country is a debate for another day. However, the Environment Protection Agency is concerned about the method of extraction which in our view is environmental degradation at an alarming rate. The mining of minerals from various parts of the country has destroyed several communities leading to biodiversity loss, land degradation, and loss of farmland, reducing the potential for agriculture and threatening food security.

Five decades of mining have resulted in deforestation, water pollution, soil contamination, and increasing land degradation due to exploration and actual mining operations, and in the case of artisanal miners, the failure to rehabilitate or restore mined-out areas.

Whist the establishment of the Environment Protection Agency has proven to be an assurance of better environmental governance the effective management and protection of the environment have remained very challenging. Section 23 of the Environment Protection Agency Act (2008) gives the mandate to the Environment Protection Agency to regulate mining operations in the country. Mining is one of the projects listed under the First Schedule of EPA Act (2008) requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) License, however, the Agency only regulates companies that are categorized as small and large-scale mining companies. EIA licensed companies are monitored every quarter to track their compliance with the terms and conditions of their licenses to minimize their environmental footprint and ensure that

their operations are conducted within acceptable environmental standards.

Section 132 of the Mines and Mineral Act 2009 imposes a general duty on every mineral right holder for the protection and management of the environment, particularly to carry out mining operations in a manner that is 'reasonably practicable to minimize, manage and mitigate any environmental impact including but not limited to pollution resulting from such operations.

However, this provision has not been always effectively enforced by the National Minerals Agency (NMA). The granting of exploration license by NMA without an environmental impact assessment and the right for oversight by EPA remains a compelling challenge for effective environmental management. Often when the EPA undertakes compliance and enforcement monitoring in areas where artisanal mining and exploration licenses have been granted, officers are alarmed at the scale of environmental degradation caused by these unregulated mining and exploration activities which worsen the socio-economic conditions of people and communities and increase security and health risks as a result of contaminated open mining pits.

The category of mining that has proven to be very problematic and largely contributes to massive environmental degradation is unregulated and uncontrolled artisanal mining. Artisanal mining doesn't require an EIA license because of the nature and scope of the mining. Artisanal mining should only be done by Sierra Leoneans using handheld tools like shovel, pickaxe, shaker, etc. However, in recent times, there has been an influx of foreigners in the artisanal sector employing the use of earth-moving machines in contravention of the terms and conditions of their licenses and causing large-scale environmental destruction. The degradation caused by this so-called artisanal mining is

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unprecedented as the mining is carried out with no regard for the environment. Whilst the mining is done haphazardly with no plan for land reclamation or rehabilitation, it is the environment, health, and livelihood of local communities that remain hugely compromised.

The so-called artisanal mining has largely compromised the integrity of major rivers in the country. Major rivers have become prey to illegal mining activities as dredging and excavation of rivers have become commonplace. The scale of river mining is unprecedented leaving major rivers polluted. The Pampana in the north, Sewa and Taia, in the south, and Moa River in the east have all been affected by illegal mining activities with long-term consequences for drinking water, biodiversity, and health not only for local communities but for the majority of Sierra Leoneans.

The continuous pollution of rivers due to contamination from the use of chemicals, oil spills, and the discharge of other toxic and hazardous substances mean that a lot of local communities, big towns, and cities will be affected by a shortage of drinking water and local fish stock for food and nutrition. Olivia Lai of www.earth.org in her article, "Water shortage: Causes and effects" maintained that contaminated and unsafe water is another contributing factor to water shortage. The high turbidity and the likely toxicity of rivers indicate present and future challenges for several communities with the potential to deny a large part of our population access to fresh water. The United Nations states that having free access to fresh water is a basic right. And losing that access to clean drinking water can be detrimental to human health and lives, as we all need water to survive. Of greater concern are the long-term health consequences that await many Sierra Leoneans who depend on these rivers for domestic purposes including drinking, cooking, and fishing.

Whilst the problem may seem localized only to rural dwellers, there is a looming public health threat to a substantial part of the general citizenry. Major cities of the country largely source their water from environments that are potentially contaminated with mercury and other toxic and hazardous substances.

The Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO) sources water for Bo residents from the Sewa River where mercury is potentially used by illegal gold miners. In Kenema, there has been an allegation of the use of Mercury by gold miners in Kamboi Hills where SALWACO also sources water for the people of Kenema. In Makeni though there is no evidence of direct mining in the Kunsho River, illegal mining activities in its tributaries mean that mercury and other toxic and hazardous substances may be present in the river which supplies the people of Makeni. This precarious situation suggests that a large number of Sierra Leoneans have serious threats to short and long-term health complications with the potential to decimate a huge population in different parts of the country.

The former United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, stated in 2010 that water pollution already kills more people each year than war and all other forms of violence combined. This sends a worrying signal to Sierra Leone where water pollution caused by human activities has increased and testing

capacity and treatment for mercury are lacking.

Mercury has serious adverse impacts on human health. A report by the Health and Environment Alliance States that high doses of mercury can be fatal to humans, but that even relatively low doses of mercury-containing compounds can have serious adverse impacts on the developing nervous system, and have recently been linked with possible harmful effects on the cardiovascular, immune, and reproductive systems. It can affect the central nervous system, kidneys, and liver and can disturb immune processes, cause tremors, impaired vision and hearing, paralysis, insomnia, and emotional instability.

High blood pressure, altered heart rate, and increased heart attack risks are also associated with mercury impacts on humans. With many recent death cases in the country related to organ failures, pressure, and heart attack, there is a need for a more thorough investigation to ascertain whether or not there is any link with mercury. The National One Health Secretariat should take a lead in this to save more people and the country from a potential public health emergency and national security crisis.

The Environment Protection Agency has been very proactive in the discharge of its mandate to monitor, manage, and protect the environment by destroying over 50 dredges that illicitly mine rivers and arresting foreigners in various parts of the country. The Government's commitment to addressing the problem was seen in the presidential declaration that banned dredge mining across the country which has seen joint monitoring of rivers by relevant institutions.

To address the problem holistically, more needs to be done. EPA and other institutions must continue to monitor the rivers to ensure that all rivers are free from mining activities. There is a need for a state-of-the-art laboratory to test for the presence of mercury and other toxic substances so that appropriate measures can be taken to treat polluted rivers. Also, water technologies that remove mercury and other heavy metals should be installed at water treatment facilities.

To enhance sustainable environmental management, EPA and NMA need to collaborate more. There is a need for the EPA to have an oversight on exploration license holders, who should also require an EIA license before the granting of an exploration license. Also, the clause that requires the submission of a valid EIA license as a precondition for a mining license must be retained. This is important to ensure sustainable environmental management and improve environmental governance in the country. The time to achieve this is now especially because the NMA bill is now in front of parliament. Environmental management and protection must be prioritized. Parliament must have an environmental lens when taking decisions on the Mines and Development Bill 2022 to ensure sustainable utilization of natural resources, combat climate change and ensure a conducive environment for current and future generations.

Also of importance is the role of local authorities in the effective management of natural resources. As custodians of the land, local authorities should have an interest in environmental protection and should collaborate with EPA to ensure the effective management and protection of the environment thereby enhancing environmental governance at the local level.

The EPA HOUR and its significance to environmental education

By Mbalu Sheriff,
IEC Officer

Just after the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency in 2010, the Agency adopted the EPA Hour in order to be able to send the required information on the environment needed by the Sierra Leonean populace.

The EPA Hour is the flagship environmental awareness and education program spearheaded and undertaken by the public relations and Intersectoral Collaboration department and fully supported by the Environment Protection Agency and its partners under the close supervision of the Ministry of the Environment.

It is a weekly one-hour television and radio discussion program often aired on all the three major television stations with broadcast audience in and out of Sierra Leone. In situations where possible, the EPA Hour program is simulcast on major radio stations across the country.

Under a special memorandum of understanding between the EPA-SL and the management of the Africell Radio, the EPA-Hour is also aired on Africell Radio in order to inform a more wider audience and listenership across the country.

The EPA Hour is done through a phone-in program format where callers are allowed to contribute and make their viewpoints through text messages sent through a dedicated number announced prior to share on the concerns of callers are normally addressed by the panelists before the end of the program.

The one-hour radio and television discussion program primarily focuses on informing and raising the awareness of Sierra Leoneans on various environmental issues including climate change related issues that are affecting the general populace in and around the country as well as activities undertaken by the EPASL.

Aired on every Thursdays, the EPA Hour hosts prominent heads/specialists members of the various departments of the agency to discuss activity-based programs they have undertaken during the succeeding or preceding weeks. Other members of the public including representatives from the organization, Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) also discuss their activities as well as help educate the public on pressing environmental issues.



Regional Consultations for the development of Air Quality and Pollution Regulations

By Ishmael Kindama Dumbuya,
Senior IEC

To effectively address environmental and health issues relating to air pollution across the country, the Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone (EPASL) with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organized regional consultations in the South, East North, and Western Provinces on the development of air quality and pollution regulations for the country. The regional consultations held in Kenema, Bo, Makeni Kono, and Freetown were attended by participants drawn mostly from government agencies including City and District Councils, Ministries Departments and Agencies, Civil Society, and representatives from the media who all played key roles in validating and making meaningful contributions towards drafting of the framework document on air pollution.

It was noted that whilst other countries have specific regulations/legislations dealing with air pollution, Sierra Leone only has draft standards on air pollution which are yet to be adopted and enacted into law.

There is presently no law on air pollution and air quality despite many industrial and mining activities as well as the pollution of water bodies and the air across the country. The absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework on air pollution has significant environmental and health implications for Sierra Leone, including an increase in the disease burden of the country. If there is a need to charge anyone for violation of the law, there must be a law or regulation to reference but as it stands now this cannot be presently done for any crimes on air pollution unless one has to rely on international instruments which may sometimes have difficult legal interpretations.

Through the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme, the EPASL approached the United Nations Environment Programme for support in formulating air pollution regulations for the country. This is in line with the initial priority area identified for the implementation of the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law with "legal responses to the air pollution crisis". Sierra Leone is one of the first countries to respond to the objective of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the global community in addressing issues relating to air quality through the law.

Air pollution is the contamination of the indoor or outdoor environment by any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere. Household combustion devices, motor vehicles, industrial facilities, and forest fires are common sources of air pollution. Over the years, Sierra Leoneans have been battling with issues of air quality and pollution as well as constraints of other environmental governance.

The Manager for the Legal Affairs, Compliance, and Enforcement Department at the EPASL, Gibrilla Kamara,



while addressing participants in the regions emphasised that Sierra Leone will not address air pollution in isolation but rather need the "continued collaboration with partners both at home and abroad". He also mentioned that air pollution does not only pose serious environmental problems but also has serious health implications which require the urgent attention of all countries and Sierra Leone in particular.

The Assistant Director for Legal Affairs, Compliance, and Enforcement, Mr. Tamba Sangba, thanked the participants for attending the consultation workshop. He referred to the mandates and functions of the EPASL in ensuring that the Sierra Leonean environment is protected for a better future. He confirmed that the air we breathe is polluted as a result of inadequate regulation of industrial, transport, mining, and even some domestic activities which are all causing environmental and health problems to people which must be urgently addressed. He informed participants that the regional consultations were organized to get and incorporate the inputs of national stakeholders in efforts to address air quality and pollution challenges in the country.

As part of our mandates as stated in Section 12 of the Environment Protection Agency Act of 2008 as amended in 2010, the EPASL had in the past established National Environmental Quality Monitoring Committees for pollution control; identified and selected monitoring stations/sites; drafted environmental air quality monitoring; drafted Air Quality Standards and Vehicle Emissions Regulations; developed standards in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau on Air, Effluent/Wastewater, Ozone Depleting Substances, noise among others.

Presentations were made by Mr. Tamba Nyaka and Mr. Joseph Sapunka Turay, Deputy Director of Climate Change and the Assistant Director for Natural Resources Management respectively on the national circumstances on air quality and pollution as well as what has been done so far and the World Health Organization's framework guidelines on air quality and pollution. Presentations were also made on the proposed substantive elements for the air quality and pollution regulations as well the institutional and compliance mechanisms for its implementation.

Photo News

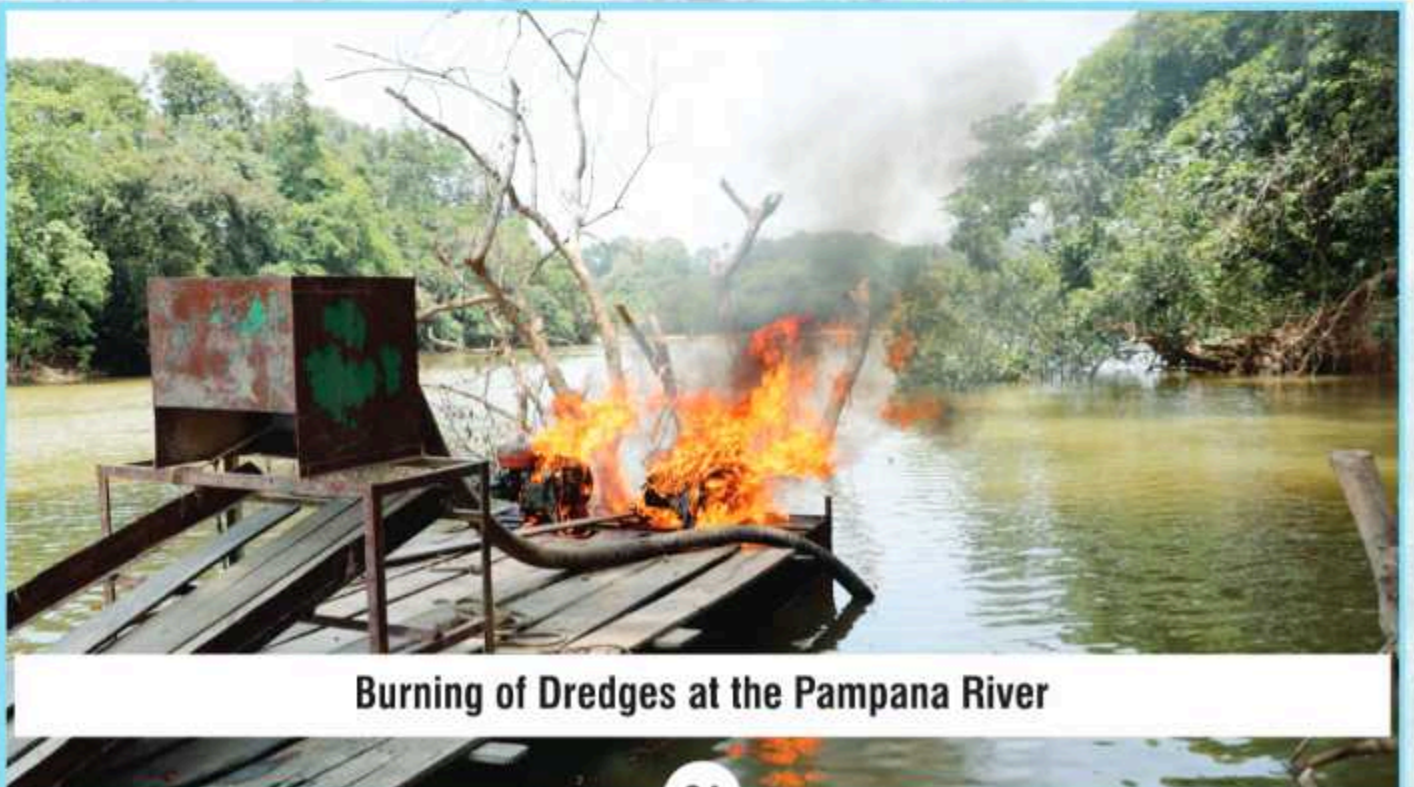
Key mile stones of the operation clean our rivers from dredges

- Reduced pollution from our riverbeds
- Destroyed over 200 dredges since 2021
- Increased strong collaboration with the Security sector
- Successfully reduced the number of foreign miners
- Reduced the number of illicit mining on the riverbeds
- Increased revenue for government
- Increased local collaboration





EPA Staff on monitoring operation at the Pampana River



Burning of Dredges at the Pampana River

Capturing the young minds of our School Nature Clubs to enhance environmental education

By Fatmata Bakarr-Sesay

Around fifty Schools Nature Clubs/environmental club were established in 2010 months after the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone. The concentration was mainly among junior and senior secondary schools within the Western Area but the idea was further spread to include regional schools across the country. This amounted to 144 Schools Nature Clubs that the Agency presently have.

The objective of setting up environmental clubs in schools was to target young minds and transform them to responsible advocates of the environment especially when they could have grown older in their various communities. The PRIC/Agency uses this platform to raise the awareness of the school's nature club members on various environmental hazards in the country.

The Environmental Club composed of concerned school pupils, Teacher Coordinators and volunteers that are committed to raising awareness about and to reducing impact among their schools, community, and as citizens of the country.

Over the years, our environmental education the school nature clubs had led to a number of positive impacts ranging from improving academic performance, enhancing critical thinking skills, developing personal growth and life-building skills including confidence and leadership. Also, through the nature clubs, the EPASL had reached and continue to reach out to the general public on the need of protection of the environment.

The school nature club has teacher coordinators who normally relate with the pupils in their various schools. The teacher coordinators are mostly persons who handles maths, science/biology subjects and who possesses great respect in those schools.

In the past years, the EPASL had always invited the schools nature club members to be part of many celebrations such as the World Environment Days, the African Environment Days, the World Ozone Days among many others.

Besides also inviting the schools nature clubs to be part of the environment days celebrations and undertake match pass, the EPASL had organized many quiz competitions for these pupils and those who participated were given prizes for winning the competitions. Schools such as Prince of Wales, Saint Edwards, Annie Walsh to name but a few had all won prizes during past environmental quiz competitions. The Schools Nature Clubs/environmental school clubs are the backbone of our environmental awareness and education drive among school going pupils across the country. To this extent, we will continue to strengthen these clubs in order to enhance environmental education across the country.



2019: Winners of the School Nature Club receiving prizes from the then executive Chairman of the EPASL

Capturing the young minds of our School Nature Clubs to enhance environmental education



Members of the school nature club including EPA Event



CHECKLIST FOR THE ISSUANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) LICENCE FOR PROJECTS UNDER THE FIRST SCHEDULE OF THE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY ACT, 2010

The developer/proponent is the applicant who is required to undertake the following stages:

Stage One – Registration

1. The applicant is required to register the project proposal/undertaking through an application process. The letter is addressed to the Executive Chairperson and copied to the Director. This is to expedite the processing of the EIA application.

2. The Agency shall issue application and screening forms to the applicant after a payment of two hundred thousand Leones at an account designated for EIA's application fees.

3. The applicant is required to return duly completed forms together with the project proposal of the undertaking to the Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone (EPA-SL) within fourteen days.

The Agency shall acknowledge receipt of the completed application and screening forms within seven days.

Stage Two – Screening

1. Project proposal, application and screening forms are screened to determine whether or not the development proposal should be subject to an EIA and, if so, the level of detail required.

After the screening, the report shall be communicated to the applicant within twenty one days from the date of receipt of the application and screening forms.

Stage Three – Scoping

1. After the project has been classified and a determination is made that the activity requires an environmental impact assessment license the proponent will be required to submit a scoping report on the project.

2. The scoping report shall set out the scope or extent of the environmental impact assessment to be carried out by the applicant and shall include a draft terms of reference which shall indicate the essential issues to be addressed in the environmental impact statement on the proposed/current undertaking.

3. The Agency shall upon receipt of a scoping report examine it and inform the applicant within twenty one days of the receipt of the report whether it is acceptable or not acceptable.

Staff of the Agency will visit the location of the project before the scoping report is accepted or not accepted by the Agency.

Stage Four – Environmental, Social and Health Impact Studies and Preparation of the Report

1. Upon approval of the scoping report and terms of reference the applicant undertakes the impact studies.

Before undertaking the environmental impact assessment, the applicant shall have the responsibility to:

Give notice of the proposal undertaking to the relevant ministries, government departments and organizations and the relevant local council;

Advertise in at least two national newspapers and a newspaper, of any circulating in the locality where the proposed undertaking is to be situated; and Make available for inspection by the general public in the locality of the proposed undertaking, copies of the scoping report.

Upon completion of the impact studies, the applicant should submit eighteen hard and soft copies of the ESHIA report to the

Agency for circulation to Board members, professional bodies and the public for comments.

Stage Five – Public Hearing and Review of the ESHIA Report

1. The applicant shall hold two or more public hearing meetings in respect of the environmental impact statement (environmental impact assessment document) for public participation in the decision-making process.

2. The applicant should choose the date(s) and venue(s) of the public hearings.

3. The applicant should also choose to pay for the publication of dates and venues of the public disclosure in at least two national newspapers. The Agency has no objection to this.

4. The report will be gazetted and circulated to professional organizations for comments.

5. Depending on the location of the project the applicant will be required to make announcements over the media in the local languages.

6. Staff of the Agency will also visit the site or operational areas of the project to ascertain the components and content of the ESHIA Report in the review stage.

7. A draft environmental impact statement shall be reviewed by the Agency after receipt of recommendations following a public hearing.

Where after review, the draft environmental impact statement is found unacceptable by the Agency, the applicant shall be notified of this in writing and shall be required

To submit a revised environmental impact statement within twenty one days of the date of reference failing which the application lapses, or

To conduct such further studies as the Agency considers necessary.

Stage Six – Decision Making

1. This is the stage where the ESHIA report is approved or rejected.

2. The Board of the EPA is vested with the power to approve or reject an application for an EIA.

3. Where an environmental impact assessment is acceptable to the Agency, an EIA license is granted which shall be valid for twelve months or a term determined by the Board effective from the date of the issue of the License. The EIA License will be subject to terms and conditions, and renewal.

4. Failure to commence operation of the undertaking within the twelve months as provided in the EPA Act, 2008 as amended in 2010 shall render the EIA License invalid after the period.

When an application has been rejected by the EPA Board, the applicant has a right to seek legal redress.

Stage Seven – Compliance and Enforcement

This is the implementation stage, environmental monitoring and auditing of the project activities is undertaken to ensure that the terms and conditions of the Environment Impact Assessment license issued are met in accordance with the Environment Protection Agency Act, 2008 as amended in 2010.

Note: EPA-SL should be involved through all these stages for guidance and compliance with the provisions of the EPA Act, 2008. ■

Achievements of the Ministry of the Environment under the Leadership of Prof. Foday Moriba Jaward



**Prof. Foday M. Jaward,
Minister of the Environment**

Environmental Governance and Management

- The Environment Ministry established in November, 2020, successfully hosted the African Environment Day, Wangari Mathai Day and African Women's Forum from 1st to 4th March, 2020, barely four months after its establishment. It has been acclaimed by the African Union (AU) as one of the best so far in Africa.
- The Ministry has reviewed 6 (six) key environmental legislations and enacted by Parliament to enhance environmental governance in Sierra Leone, and these are:
 - Wildlife Act of 1972, which has never been reviewed/updated; Now Wildlife Amendment Act 2022,
 - Environment Protection Agency Act of 2008 as amended in 2010; Now EPA-SL Amendment Act 2022,
 - National Protected Area Authority and Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2012; Now NPAA Amendment Act 2022.
 - Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency of 2017; Now SLMet Amendment Act 2022.
 - Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Authority of 2012; Now Nuclear Safety and Protection Authority Amendment Act 2022.
 - Forestry Act of 1988; Now Forestry Amendment Act 2022
 - Reviewed the 1994 National Environment Policy. We now have the 2020 National Environment Policy
 - Secured Cabinet approval of the Development Induced National Resettlement Policy, 2020. This Policy has been presented to Cabinet by the Minister and approved by Cabinet. The Ministry received support from the Millennium Challenges Cooperation (MCC) to guide resettlement triggered by development activities. Most countries in Africa are yet to produce one even in the face of development induced resettlement issues. Currently

working on the bill for enactment by Parliament.

Managing Forest Resources and Promoting Sustainable Environmental Protection

- Launched of Phase two of the National Tree Planting and Reforestation Project (NTPP) through Symbolic tree planting nationwide – Planting five million trees in four years on approximately 14,706 hectares of degraded lands all over Sierra Leone from 2020 – 2023 to minimize the impacts of climate change and in fulfilment of the commitments in the Medium-Term National Development Plan. One Million one hundred million trees were planted in Phase 1 of the NTPP (2020-2021), restored over 1,500 hectares of degraded lands (terrestrial and coastal); provided 20,000 jobs (7,000 permanent and 13,000 temporary).

Building Resilience to Climate Change

- Improved meteorological services for early warning systems; backed up by a reliable and effective state of the earth weather stations and forecasting models.
- Promoted disaster risk management in general (including disaster preparedness) and protective infrastructure (e.g. "hard" options such as seawalls and flood reservoirs, or "soft" options such as buffer zones via afforestation or reforestation of mangroves).
- Sierra Leone's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is being finalized and made ready latest by June, 2021.
- Sierra Leone's National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) for Climate Change has been updated this year.
- Sierra Leone's 4th National Environmental Communication Strategy is being developed.
- National Climate Change Policy has been reviewed this year.
- The Environment Protection Agency with funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is implementing the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) Project which aims to build and strengthen Sierra Leone's national capacity to implement the transparency elements of the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Four Marine Weather Stations successfully installed by the Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency in Bonthe, Lungi (Targrin), Shenge and Government Wharf, Freetown to collect real-time weather data for dissemination to the public.
- Successful Regional media engagements and weekly programme on SLBC to educate and create awareness on Environmental issues in the country.
- Airing of daily weather forecasts and uninterrupted provision of Aviation Meteorological Services for safe landing, taking-off of flights, including services for flights en route to Sierra Leone Airspace.

KEY FUNCTIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The Environmental Protection Agency Act of 2008 is an Act that establishes the Sierra Leone Environment Protection Agency, being an act to provide for the effective protection of the environment and for other related matters. A new 2021 EPASL Act has been passed by the Parliament of Sierra Leone and is awaiting presidential assent. Until then, the 2008 is being used and subject to the 2008 Act, the Agency shall perform the following functions:

- (a) advise the Minister on the formulation of policies on all aspects of the environment and in particular make recommendation for the protection of the environment;
- (b) co-ordinate the activities of bodies concerned with the technical or practical aspects of the environment and serve as a channel of communication between such bodies and the Minister;
- (c) co-ordinate the activities of such bodies as it considers appropriate for the purposes of controlling the generation, treatment, storage, transportation and disposal of industrial waste;
- (d) secure, in collaboration with such persons as it may determine the control and prevention of discharge of waste into the environment and the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment;
- (e) collaborate and coordinate with such foreign and international bodies as the Agency considers necessary for the purposes of this Act;
- (f) issue environmental permits and pollution abatement notices for controlling the volume, types, constituents and effects of waste discharges, emissions, deposits or other source of pollutants and of substances which are hazardous or potentially dangerous to the quality of the environment or any segment of the environment;
- (g) issue notices in the form of directives, procedures or warnings to such bodies as it may determine for the purpose of controlling the volume, intensity and quality of noise in the environment;
- (h) prescribe standards and guidelines relating to ambient air, water and soil quality, the pollution of air, water, land and other forms of environmental pollution including the discharge of wastes and the control of toxic substances;
- (i) ensure compliance with any laid down environmental impact assessment procedures in the planning and execution of development projects, including compliance in respect of existing projects;
- (j) act in liaison and co-operation with government agencies, local councils and other bodies and institutions to control pollution and generally protect the environment;
- (k) conduct investigations into environmental issues and advise the Minister thereon; (l) promote studies, research, surveys and analyses for the improvement and protection of the environment and the maintenance of a sound ecological system;
- (m) initiate and pursue formal and non-formal educational programmes for the creation of public awareness of the environment and its importance to the economic and social life of Sierra Leone;
- (n) promote effective planning in the management of the environment;
- (o) develop a comprehensive database on the environment;
- (p) impose and collect environmental protection levies in accordance with this Act or regulations made under this Act;
- (q) coordinate and monitor the implementation of national environmental policies;
- (r) coordinate with Government Ministries, local councils and other agencies on matters relating to environmental protection and management;
- (s) collect and make available to the public or interested persons or bodies, through publications and other appropriate means and in cooperation with public or private organizations, environmental data and information;
- (t) promote the establishment of national environmental standards;
- (u) act as the focal point on all issues concerning the environment; and
- (v) perform any other function conferred on it under this Act.

From Page 3

have also reviewed all 6 legislations of the agencies under our supervision, reviewed and updated the National Climate Change Policy, developed a National Communications Strategy for the Environment Sector, and intensified education and information campaigns to reduce practices harmful to the environment using Radio and TV programs such Environment Hour, "village to village" road show, established an Environmental Court to fast-track prosecution of all environmental infractions, developed training Manual and currently training 60 law enforcement officers on environmental law. Last year, we employed, trained, and deployed over 500 game guards in all the protected areas in the country.

4. An education curriculum including environmental and climate change issues is also being developed for schools, colleges, and universities.
5. Recently, we have intensified robust security measures to protect all forest and National reserve areas including the Outamba Kilimi National Park, the Western Area Peninsular Park, the Gola Rain Forest, and the Tacugama Sanctuary. Quite recently, the visit by HE. the President Ret. Brig. Dr. Julius Maada Bio to the Western Area Peninsular Park heightened public awareness and enforcement of environmental compliance to simply control our actions and inactions towards preserving the

environment. These and other actions demonstrate the government's commitment to ensuring the sustainable preservation of our country's biodiversity and fragile ecosystem.

For the very first time in the history of our country, the government of Sierra Leone was accorded the rare opportunity of showcasing its efforts as well as its environmental challenges via a dedicated booth during the 2021 climate change summit in Glasgow, Scotland, thanks to the support of His Excellency the President Rtd Brig. Dr. Julius Maada Bio.

On this occasion of World Environment Day, all need to note that even little action matters when it comes to protecting our environment.

On behalf of His Excellency the President, Ret. Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio, I would like to extend my appreciation to Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Donor partners, Civil Society Organizations, local councils, traditional authorities and members of the Fourth Estate, and youth and women's groups for their unflinching support to the work of the Ministry of the Environment.

"Unless we change our ways and protect and restore our ecosystems, we will not only destroy the landscape we love, we will undermine the foundations of our well-being and bequeath a degraded, inhospitable planet to future generations".



Environment Protection Agency



Get a valid license

from the Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone if you are the owner of a vehicle maintenance garage or thinking of establishing one



Avoid unsafe disposal of hazardous materials

like acid, engine oil, coolants and other lubricants, and even scrapped vehicles



Hazardous materials are dangerous

to our health and our environment

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