

Project Update: July 2023

The implementation of the project entitled ‘‘Primates Biomonitoring, and Capacity Building of Local Community Members for Ecotourism and Conservation Gains in Jaibui Island and Adjacent Human Communities’ commenced with a stakeholder engagement meeting held on 8th July 2023 in Kambama Village - one of the Island’s seven human communities and the closest access route for entering the island. The meeting was hosted with the prime purpose to present the scope and planned deliverables with accompanied timelines of the project to the community stakeholders coupled with the present and long-term benefits that informed its implementation for improving on the livelihood of the community members, and long-term conservation of primates, other threatened wildlife species and the overall management of the Jaibu Island.

The stakeholder engagement meeting brought together 21 community stakeholders (three from each of the seven human communities) occupying relevant positions and serving in different capacities towards the governance and development of the communities and its surrounding natural resources. These included Town Chief, Town Speaker, Youth Leader, Youth (men and women), Women’s Leader, Elders, Landowners and Religious Leaders among others from Kambama, Sahun, Boma, Gbengama, Baoma Ngeya, Memei, and Yombowulo communities. In addition to the community stakeholders were the project lead and two project team members who supported the activity.

To achieve the purpose of the engagement, the project proposal was summarised into a PowerPoint presentation and explained to the stakeholders in the general local language (Mende) of the communities. Mende is widely spoken and understood by every member of the community hence chosen as the preferred medium of communication to facilitate community understanding and inputs during the meeting. During the meeting, the various project components to include background and deliverables such as the origin and future vision of the project; the importance of inception meeting; identification and recruitment of six community bio-monitors; training of the six community bio-monitors on using Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART); procurement of two smartphones to facilitate data collection by bio-monitors; monthly stipend to bio-monitors; carving of two local wooden boats; training of 14 community members on ecotourism services; bushmeat sensitisation in the communities; and survey on bushmeat and hunting around and within the island were explicitly explained to the community stakeholders with justification as the pre-selected outputs of the project. Besides, the concept of ecotourism was further simplified for thorough understanding by the stakeholders and how it can contribute to the development of their communities and livelihoods.

At the end of the presentation, community stakeholders had the opportunity to ask several questions related to the project, stretching out their involvement and complete understanding of the project and its future implications. Questions were mainly targeted on benefits of the whole project on their living conditions as a community. All the questions were answered by the project team members, and some community members who have existing understanding on ecotourism and its benefits from other sites like Tiwai Island and Gola Rainforest National Park that share land boundaries with the Island contributed positive answers to the discussion.

The meeting ended on a positive perspective with the hope that communities will start receiving tourists following the completion of three new ecolodges by Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary that has existing agreement with the communities to co-manage the island as a site for biodiversity conservation and promotion of forest-based tourism linked to livelihood diversification and development of the community members.

Further discussion on the identification, recruitment and training of the community bio-monitors was achieved as the next activity on the project timeline. Towards the implementation of that activity, the community stakeholders were asked to identify six youths from their communities to be engaged for the said activity.



Newly constructed ecolodge at Jaibui Island by the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. © Ambrose Bockarie Kanneh.



Project inception meeting with stakeholders from the seven adjacent communities of Jaibui Island hosted in Kambama community. © Mikalu Mansaray