



ISLAND BIODIVERSITY DAY CELEBRATION ON 22ND MAY 2016 AT PEPEL AND TASSO ISLANDS

Islands are one of the precious gems of a nation; and their biodiversity, ecosystems and environments therefore have to be protected, conserved and preserved for sustainable survival and livelihood. The islands have unique features of the richness of nature, as the treasure of biodiversity; as the bell weather for international environmental policies.



View of Peipel and Bunce islands

This global event, Island Biodiversity Day is celebrated annually worldwide on 22nd May; to escalate the extent of Vulnerability Island communities are fraught with and see how best innovative action and solutions can be made, to make islands as resilient and safe havens for sustainable developments ; and as drivers for sustainable tourism development. In 2014, at the UN General Assembly Session in Samoa, this day was dedicated to Islands, which ecosystem and biodiversity habitations are under threat as a result of the growing risk of climate, environmental disasters or shocks and harsh human activities; that has occasioned to the loss and extinction of the environmental assets; viz, mangroves vegetations , coral reefs and tropical rain forest



The Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Mr. Sidi Yayah Tunis, making a point on sustainable Island development and the impact on ecotourism

IslandAid Sierra Leone, being a community development organization that promotes island conservation biodiversity and sustainable livelihood, therefore decided to join the UN Secretariat on Biological Diversity to celebrate Islands' Day on 22nd May 2016 at Pepel and Tasso Islands.

This year's occasion focused on biodiversity protection and sustainable livelihood of vulnerable island communities worldwide, and Sierra Leone in particular. It escalated the perennial problems affecting the ecosystems and environmental management that has resulted to biodiversity loss and livelihood gap. The concept presentations by related line MDAs (Ministry, Departments and Agencies) and other key stakeholders were tailored within the ambit the UN Agenda of Sustainable Development.

The Executive Director, IslandAid Sierra, Dura Koroma talked on Island governance and the role of state actors; and the effect of biodiversity loss on the sustainable livelihood of Island communities. That biodiversity is life, on which the island communities depend on for their daily survival. He however related the link between development and environmental protection, which has opposing effect with negative externalities.



Executive Director, IslandAid Sierra Leone, Mr. Dura Koroma, addressing the issue of the negative externalities of development and Biodiversity protection

The problems inherent in islands cannot be fully addressed by the government; it involves collaborative effort. This was affirmed by the Director of Tourism, Mohamed Jalloh. In his contribution, he stressed the need for the private sector and community based organizations to come onboard for the tourism industry to once again regain its economic viability and global competitive challenge. He emphatically reiterated that islands are the drivers for the sustainable development of the tourism industry in the country. And that his Ministry can only achieve their set policy objectives on sustainable tourism and cultural development, if effective collaborative partnership is established. And that the novel initiative of IslandAid Sierra Leone was commendable, which would be supported in order to realize the desired result. Given that islandAid Sierra Leone is the advocacy platform, an interface on behalf of the Island communities in the country, a bond of mutual commonality and interest will be reached for a policy direction of shared interest.



Director, Tourism, Mr. Mohamed Jalloh, talking on the issues of Islands as the drivers for sustainable tourism development, given a resilient and protected ecosystem and Biodiversity

The Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Sidi Yayah Tunis assured the Island communities of his determination to bring a change, which effect would positively impact their lives. He however related tourism development to biodiversity protection and environmental management, which he said are key variables in the equation of sustainable tourism development. And that his Ministry would work with IslandAid Sierra Leone for the attainment of sustainable tourism, which benefit would also be realized by the communities; especially in the area of ecotourism, cultural tourism, agritourism and aqua culture. He assured the island community stakeholders that plans were underway a for a strategic policy framework to be formulated to fully address island issues to enhance sustainable tourism development. That islands being the drivers of sustainable tourism development, its land planning and use and development framework will be put in place alongside other key focus areas of intervention; that is, environmental management and biodiversity protection. He admonished the islanders that they should exert effort to halt biodiversity loss to have resilient islands that would be safe for tourism investments.



Hon. Minister Sidi Yayah Tunis, talking on collaborative partnership with IslandAid Sierra Leone and island community stakeholders

The island communities commended the Executive Director of IslandAid Sierra Leone, Dura Koroma, an indigene of Tasso Island who has been supporting their communities, especially in the areas of community education on environmental management, agricultural development schemes, ecotourism development, environmental assets management and biodiversity protection.



The various island communities listening to the presentations by the MDAs

The economic activity of the island communities is predominantly fishing, from which their daily sustainable survival depends. And the activities of the mining companies along the coastal areas have grossly restrained them; being deterred from going off shore to fish; and has affected their survival. The urgent remedy is an alternative economic livelihood; that is agricultural development. This we exposed the negative externality of development. This was highlighted by the community elders at Pepel and Tasso Islands



Mr. Emmanuel Kain, Director, Research Monument and Relics Commission, talking about the preservation, safety and security of the colonial heritages in the islands

The Director of Research, Monument and Relics Commission, Emmanuel Kain gave a cursory background of his office's statutory mandate, which he noted is responsible to preserved colonial, historic and traditional heritages, which are mostly found in the islands. He noted they have touristic attraction which can also benefit the island communities; but he also admonished them to ensure that the relics or monuments in the islands are preserved and protected. This can be done in collaboration with the security forces, preferable the police



LUC attached to Pepel talking about the safety and security of the monuments and relics; and also the islanders

The LUC in Pepel Saidu Sesay assured community stakeholder and the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs of the security mechanisms he had put in place to deter any criminal act within the island communities, especially islands long the rokel and bangasoka rivers (Bunce, Pepel and Tasso Islands



Sainku Fofana, M&E Nacsa, addressing the issue of social and economic reintegration within the island communities as a gloss to sustainable development; that narrows economic disparity

Representative from the National Committee of Social Action, (Nacsa) Sainku Fofana, talked about the mobilization of social action as a gloss to sustainable development; and that island is no exception to be part of the development train. He however noted that this particular event has given his office lead to a new policy direction of island governance viz; environmental management and biodiversity protection



Mr. Luseni Alpha, NPAA, addresses the issue of Biodiversity protection and Environmental management on which the survival of life depends; that Island communities must halt biodiversity loss

Also, Luseni Alpha, National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), addressed the problem of ecological vulnerability of the islands, biodiversity loss, (coastal and marine) pollution, invasive species, catastrophic disasters and instability. With this, he noted that to enhance island resilience and promote sustainable ecosystem management, there was the need to have foster collaborative partnership with community leaders and other pressure groups. He also noted that the care of the islands is the responsibility of all; that their conservation biodiversity protection and sustainable use is vital for the survival of the people



Councillor, Ward 48, Mr. Abu Bakarr Kamara, representing the Mayor, FCC, addresses the issue of development curse and non compliance to corporate social responsibilities obligations by mining companies along the coastal areas

Councillor, Abu Bakar Kamara(Bookish) that represented the Mayor, Freetown Municipality, talked on the issue of the failure of the mining companies along the coastal areas to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities, in which the island have been affected by their operations. He however made an ultimatum, a strong message conveyed to the management of the mining company to fully honour responsibility, which if they failed would lead to an unexpected eventuality, which could not be contained. He therefore admonished them to walk the talk for the good of all. Such a radical move was welcome by the islanders whose the economic survival long been deprived with neglected and isolation.



Mr. Harry S Mustapha talks on the novel initiative of IslandAid Sierra that gears to the sustainable development of the islands in the country in line with UN Agenda 21

The Island development consultant dubbed as chairman of the occasion, Harry Mustapha talked on the economic and social disparity in the islands, which gap can be narrowed by formulating a strategic policy framework of sustainable island development in line with UN Agenda 21, to fully address the inherent issues affecting the islands; that various UN resolutions have been adopted for island solutions; and working in partnership with IslandAid Sierra Leone, a policy paper will be presented to the government through the line MDAs (Ministries of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Monument and Relics Commission, National Protected Area Authority and others; to name a few. This initiative was however welcome by the Minister of Tourism, Sidi Yayah Tunis.



Mr. Dura Koroma, Executive Director IslandAid Sierra Leone talks on environmental health and tourism development

The Executive Director IslandAid Sierra Leone, Dura Koroma, also talked about a healthy island environment, which he noted would sustain the livelihood and aspirations of the island communities; the goal being to ensure the future use of the islands for tourism development; and resources, for the benefit of both the communities and the country as a whole..

In line with the view of island Development Consultant, Harry Mustapha, the Director, Dura Koroma also emphasized on the formulation of an institutional policy framework to enhance the effective management of the island natural resources that can attract sustainable tourism development. He reiterated that the sustainable development of islands has been a global phenomenon that necessitated and catalysed commitment for innovative solutions and actions



Participants: Various island communities

The island communities' stakeholders also raised concerns about the degree and extent of deprivation, isolation and neglect; as they are devoid of the basic social and economic amenities; also for the provision of sustainable alternative livelihood and island vulnerability.



Community environmental education on environmental management and biodiversity protection

The Director, IslandAid Sierra Leone and team launched a sensitization campaign on biodiversity protection and environmental management; overfishing and island resilience



Community environmental education on environmental management and biodiversity protection

Nature and life have to be protected and preserved. And that is what IslandAid Sierra Leone promotes, to ensure safe island environment for sustainable tourism development, which in turn will benefit the island communities.



Director, Tourism, Mr. Mohamed Jalloh, responds to questions posed by islanders; also emphasizes on effective collaborative partnership

The Director of Tourism, Mohamed Jalloh, in answering to questions posed by the islanders, emphasized the need for effective collaborative partnership with the communities and IslandAid Sierra Leone. That they cannot do it all; and with this novel initiative of islandAid Sierra Leone, had provided them a lead of policy direction that could be addressed with rational commitment of purpose.

In making an overview, the Executive Director, IslandAid Sierra Leone, Dura Koroma, informed participants about his organisation's intended activity in September and December; that is, Stakeholders' consultative on sustainable Island Development and Island Fiesta and lantern parade respectively. All is geared to promote Island conservation biodiversity and sustainable livelihood; and to halt biodiversity loss in order to enhance sustainable tourism development.

Regarding such, he however noted that his organisation was not without constraints; devoid of financial/liquidity strength to undertake such activities. He therefore implored on the government through its line MDAs, NGOS, Development partners, corporate business coalitions and friends of islands to support the novel initiative of his organisation, which can have a positive impact on tourism development.

He also commended the various island communities for their usual cooperation and commitment to the development of the islands in the country; and the event therefore carved the hope for resilient islands and sustainable livelihood.

In conclusion, it is prudent to say that IslandAid Sierra Leone is financially handicapped to meeting its emerging challenges; and we are therefore imploring on you all for your support, to ensure safe islands, as nature is speaking to catalyse commitment to addressing the growing threat of climate change on the islands

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