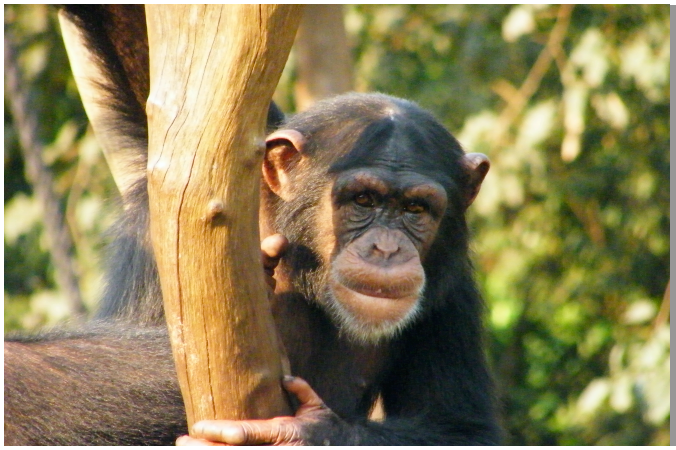




Strengthening Leadership for Conservation in Sierra Leone and Liberia through Research and Training on the Western Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*)

A Two-Year (2013 - 2015) Project at Njala University, Sierra Leone

(With support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Great Apes Conservation Fund)

Center for Biodiversity Research

KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICE

Leadership Training through.....

- A cutting-edge curriculum – covering both fundamental and contemporary issues
- An innovative learning experience – from theory to practice
- A multidisciplinary approach – integrating relevant perspectives and themes
- Focus on technical, social, and mental skills
- Mentoring for teamwork and collaborative action
- A foundation for career advancement



Tiwai Island in Sierra Leone is home to a population of nut-cracking Chimpanzees

Strengthening Leadership for Conservation in Sierra Leone and Liberia through Research and Training on the Western Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*)

Purpose and Rationale

The project seeks to strengthen conservation leadership in Sierra Leone and Liberia by implementing an integrated research and training program at Njala University, focusing specifically on conservation of the Western Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) as a flagship species. The Chimpanzee is symbolic of the overall conservation dilemma in West Africa – **habitat fragmentation, bushmeat hunting, pet trade,** and **conflicts with humans** – that require innovative leaders for implementing effective and successful long-term solutions.

There are several important conservation efforts underway in the two countries to tackle these challenges, including a focus on protection of transboundary forest areas. As a result, the potential for strengthening conservation efforts between the two countries has increased considerably. Achievements from these efforts will not be sustained in the long-term, however, in the absence of appropriate expertise and leadership across all relevant government and non-governmental institutions. Njala University is proposing to use targeted actions and training for Chimpanzee conservation to strengthen leadership in the two countries.

Goal and Objectives

Because of its global appeal and conservation significance, the Western Chimpanzee presents a unique opportunity for addressing capacity needs in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The long-term goal of the project is to strengthen leadership for wildlife conservation in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Program will focus on the Western Chimpanzee as conservation flagship species in the two countries. It will facilitate direct link between science and practice, and targeted specifically to the Gola National Park and Lofa-Mano transboundary forest area where significant populations of Chimpanzees abound.

Specific objectives of the project are to:

1) Train and mentor a cadre of professionals for effective leadership in wildlife conservation;

2) Establish a foundation for Chimpanzee conservation science at Njala University; and

3) Facilitate collaborative exchanges on Chimpanzee conservation between professionals in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Mentoring for the Protection of Apes and Conservation of Ecosystems (MENTOR-PACE)

Njala University has secured a grant through a Cooperative Agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which will enable the proposed training Program to be implemented as part of the USFWS MENTOR (Mentoring for Environmental Training in Outreach and Resource conservation) Fellowship Program. The grant is matched by in-kind contribution from the University to facilitate engagement by staff as well as use of campus facilities during implementation of the program.

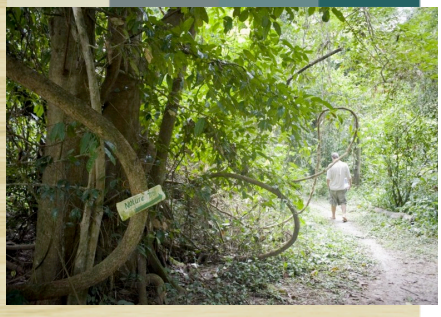
The overall program will focus specifically on Mentoring for the Protection of Apes and Conservation of Ecosystems (MENTOR-PACE). It will involve the development and implementation of an 18-month training and mentorship Program for eight (8) qualified professionals from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other entities actively involved in conservation actions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

MENTOR-PACE will use a combination of lectures, field work, and on-the-job training, implemented with close involvement of the candidates' home institutions to enhance potential for immediate impact. Hence, a strong partnership with the home institutions is an essential component of the program, which will ensure that the candidates engage fully throughout the implementation.

In addition to increased support to Chimpanzee conservation by Njala University, the trained and mentored professionals will contribute directly toward strengthening the roles of their respective institutions in wildlife conservation. They will also form the core of a network of expertise in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, thereby promoting teamwork and collaborative action for Chimpanzee conservation, with institutional support from universities in both countries.

MENTOR-PACE

Through MENTOR-PACE, eight (8) trained and mentored professionals will be positioned to effectively strengthen roles of their respective institutions in wildlife conservation nationally. The skills and knowledge they acquire from the Program will help to bridge the science and practice of conservation for safeguarding Chimpanzees in the long-term, including in transboundary areas between Liberia and Sierra Leone where many other endemic and/or threatened Upper Guinean species abound.



"MENTOR-PACE - building a new generation of Conservation Leaders for West Africa"

NJALA UNIVERSITY

Njala University is Sierra Leone's leading institution for training in Environmental Sciences, Natural and Physical Sciences, Agriculture, Education, and Social Sciences at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The University has seven (7) Schools / Faculties including Environmental Sciences, Forestry and Horticulture, Agriculture, Education, Social Sciences, Community Health Sciences, and Technology. The proposed project will be anchored in the School of Forestry and Horticulture, which includes the Department of Wildlife Management. It will also involve staff from the Department of Biological Sciences in the School of Environmental Sciences, and the Institute of Geography and Development Studies.

Center for Biodiversity Research

In order to foster a multidisciplinary approach to training, Njala University established a Center for Biodiversity Research (CBR) that serves as platform for collaborative engagement by staff. CBR operates as a "convening space" for multidisciplinary work by staff with relevant expertise in biodiversity conservation in the schools of Forestry and Horticulture, and Environmental Sciences. The staff qualifications range from highly experienced PhD holders to young and talented MSc graduates. CBR also enables long-term engagement with field research facilities such as Tiwai Island and elsewhere in order to ensure continuity and consistency over time. It also facilitates links with international institutions and engages Sierra Leonean nationals working as environment and conservation experts in such institutions around the world.

Tiwai Island Field Research Station

Njala University operates a field research station on Tiwai Island where most of the training will take place. The island is endowed with a wide range of forest-dependent flora and fauna, including 11 species of non-human primates, the pygmy hippopotamus, white-breasted guinea-fowl, and the elusive Cusimanse mongoose. The high diversity combined with significantly high biomass in such a relatively small area makes Tiwai Island one of the world's most unique places for training in wildlife ecology and conservation. Tiwai was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1987 and is currently managed by the communities in two chiefdoms – Barri and Koya, in partnership with the Environmental Foundation for Africa, an NGO that operates in both Sierra Leone and Liberia. The research station includes dormitories and facilities for training.

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KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICE

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