



**Urgent request for support into COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue the maintenance of 93 chimpanzees under the care of Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Sierra Leone – West Africa.**

**March 2020**

**CONTEXT**

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary (TCS) was founded in 1995 by conservationist Bala Amarasekaran with the Government of Sierra Leone, to rehabilitate critically endangered Western chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) confiscated through law enforcement. TCS is a conservation organization pivotal in protecting the biodiversity of Sierra Leone.

Tacugama's mission is to educate the public on threats to the species, and how they can help save the remaining 5500 wild chimpanzees in Sierra Leone, while improving the lives of the surrounding communities. At present, the sanctuary cares for 93 chimpanzees that live in semi-wild enclosures in the Western Area Peninsula National Park, near the capital city Freetown

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary is pleading for external support as the number of new confirmed cases of the Wuhan Coronavirus, or COVID-19, grows worldwide. There are high chances that the virus has reached Sierra Leone already with some cases confirmed in the neighbouring countries Liberia and Guinea, but the lack of resources in the country makes difficult an early stage identification of the virus in the population.

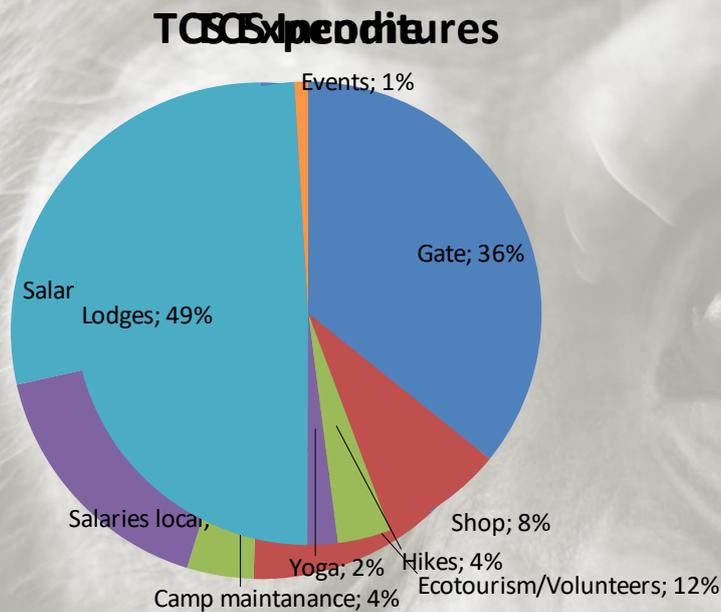
It is very challenging for the sanctuary as an institution at the forefront of its work of animal welfare and conservation to encounter this significant world health issue. We still have no fundamental understanding how the virus could affect the chimpanzees and are consequently implementing appropriate prevention measurements and care to protect the resident sanctuary chimpanzees' population and the staff working close to them.

Tacugama, as a Sanctuary, bases **50%** of its running, through the implementation of various income generating initiatives, including guided educational tours, eco-lodges, volunteering and social events (fig 1), these programmes depend of the international community (fig2). The current circumstances predict that the number of international visitors is going to decrease in the next months due to lack of tourism and prevention measurements taken by

the Sierra Leone government. This decreased number of tourists will directly affect the care of the chimps, therefore disturbing the welfare of the captive population and the 35 members of the staff working currently at the Sanctuary. If the Sanctuary needs to close down there will be a deficit on approximately 10,000 usd and the amount and variety of food will get scarce and the prices will go up, as well as the biosecurity measures will be deficient due to the privation of certain products such as bleach, masks, gloves and other disinfectants; now the costs are remarkable high and way out of our operational budget.

Fig 1

Fig 2



We are approaching you in order to ask for your help and if you/your organisation would kindly support Tacugama to address this critical problem please would you contact our management staff: [info@tacugama.co](mailto:info@tacugama.co) / [tcsvetsl@gmail.com](mailto:tcsvetsl@gmail.com).

Thanks in advance for your support,

Tacugama Team.