

LIBERIAN FISHING COMMUNITIES: Problems and Solutions



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Protecting People and Planet



An EJF Report – in partnership with Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL)

Funded by the EU





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Key:

T = Trawlers

FB = Fanti boats

LM = Lack of materials (boats and machines)

LN = Lack of nets

MN = Monofilament nets

NT = Net theft

PF = Lack of processing facilities and/or wood

Conversion: 70 L\$ = 1 US\$

DY = Dynamite fishing

LCS = Lack of cold storage and market access

SE = Sea erosion

FP = Fuel prices

SL = Sierra Leone Navy

BS = Beach seine

EJF in Liberia

EJF is a UK based NGO working internationally to protect the natural environment and the people and wildlife that depend upon it by linking environmental security, human rights and social need. Objectives in the area of fisheries include improving the transparency of international marine fisheries, preventing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, safeguarding the food security of coastal communities and protecting legitimate fishers that suffer an unfair disadvantage from illegal and unsustainable fishing activities and protecting marine biodiversity. In West Africa, EJF has two offices in Sierra Leone, open since 2009, and in 2012 began working in Liberia with local partner the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL).

In 2011, EJF began a five-year project funded by the European Union to continue its work in Sierra Leone and extend it to Liberia, where it is operating initially from offices in Monrovia and Robertsport. The project will include the following activities:

- Coastal community engagement through meetings and studies.
- Capacity building with local partners, including the Society of Conservation of Nature in Liberia and selected Collaborative Management Associations (CMAs).
- Engagement with national and local governments.
- Coastal community engagement through community surveillance, particularly targeting illegal foreign trawlers.

As a first step in community engagement, and to inform the other sets of activities in Liberia, in early 2012 EJF held meetings in 13 communities. These were spread across the country, though seven were focused in Grand Cape Mount County, which is the site of Liberia's recently inaugurated pilot CMA. This document sets out findings from each community. It also provides an analytical summary of results across Liberia that will inform a set of working recommendations that will guide EJF's work with artisanal fishing communities, both in Liberia and elsewhere in West Africa.

Methodology

Each of the 13 meetings began with participants introducing themselves. Approximately 10-15 community members took part in meetings. Communities were provided with advance notice of meetings in person or by telephone. EJF provided a brief overview of its work globally and in Sierra Leone and explained it was improving its understanding of the issues faced by fishermen in Liberia and gathering information on existing local governance structures. Basic details on the community were recorded where such information was known by participants. In each meeting, EJF posed the following questions:

- What are the most significant challenges and problems faced by the fishing community?
- What rules have been devised by the community in response to these problems?
- Who is responsible for devising and implementing these rules, and which other authorities play a role in the management of local fisheries?
- What are the community's views on Collaborative Management Associations?

For each question as many participants as possible were encouraged to provide answers. Responses were given equal weight regardless of the standing of the participant in their village (i.e. chief or women's leader).

Communities Visited



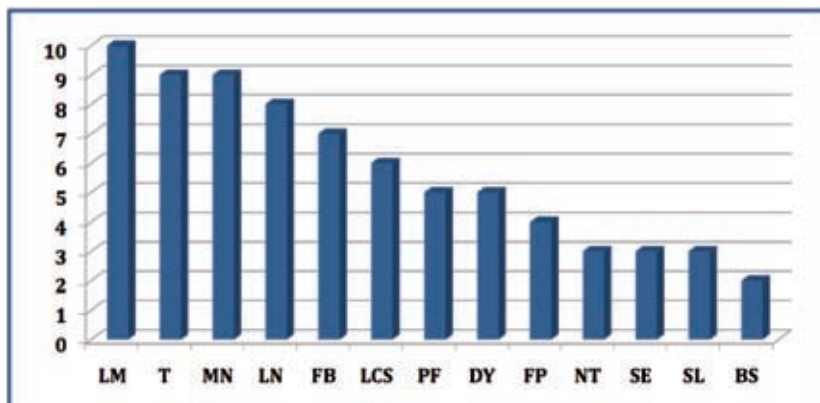
Liberia



Grand Cape Mount County

Analysis of Findings: problems and challenges

Issues identified as problems or challenges by communities are depicted in the graph below:



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Of the eight issues identified by five or more communities, four relate to destructive fishing practices (local and industrial) and four pertain to trade concerns (poor inputs and a lack of market access). This reflects the twin challenges Liberian fishing reforms face: reducing illegal fishing whilst at the same time increasing the economic return from fishing. As these reforms can sometimes conflict in the short-term (enforcing the ban on monofilament nets will result in many fishermen suffering reduced catches), they will require careful sequencing.

It was felt that local illegal fishing practices occurred at such a high rate due to a lack of government enforcement capacity. Local communities commonly develop and enforce rules governing minor infractions (see next section) but feel disempowered to confront serious issues, such as the use of illegal nets, which could entail denying a transgressor access to a livelihood.

Most communities saw poor terms of trade in fishing as particularly severe in Liberia compared to the rest of the West Africa region. Fuel, nets, boats and engines were widely felt to be cheaper in Ghana, the Ivory Coast and even Sierra Leone. Kru communities (made up of Liberian nationals) said the cheap availability of inputs in Ghana gave Fanti communities (made up of Ghanaians and first generation Liberians with links to Ghana) an advantage. Even Fanti communities, however, complained of the high costs of transporting cheap materials from Ghana to Liberia.

It is important to note that communities did not necessarily hold unified views on particular challenges. In Tosor and Grand Cess, for instance, though it was recognised that the use of illegal monofilament nets was a significant issue, fishermen were not prepared to forfeit or exchange their nets because of the negative impact a conversion to thread nets would have on their livelihoods. In Robertsport and Buchanan, however, fishermen looked forward to exchanging their monofilament nets for thread nets because they felt the latter would dramatically improve the quality, if not initially the quantity, of their catches.

RECOMMENDATION: Collaborative Management Associations (CMAs), and the national and international bodies that support them, must place equal weight on reducing illegal practices and improving terms of trade. In particular, the latter must be made available specifically to those who stand to lose by the former. This must be done in a timely manner to maintain access to livelihoods.

Analysis of Findings: Industrial Trawlers and Catch Level

Fishing by industrial trawlers was cited as a problem in nine of the 10 ocean-facing communities visited by EJF. Overall, however, communities reported a reduction in trawler activity since the start of 2011. This coincides with the West African Regional Fisheries Project's work to implement a moratorium on industrial fishing in early 2011, which was followed by enhanced monitoring, control and surveillance once fishing resumed.

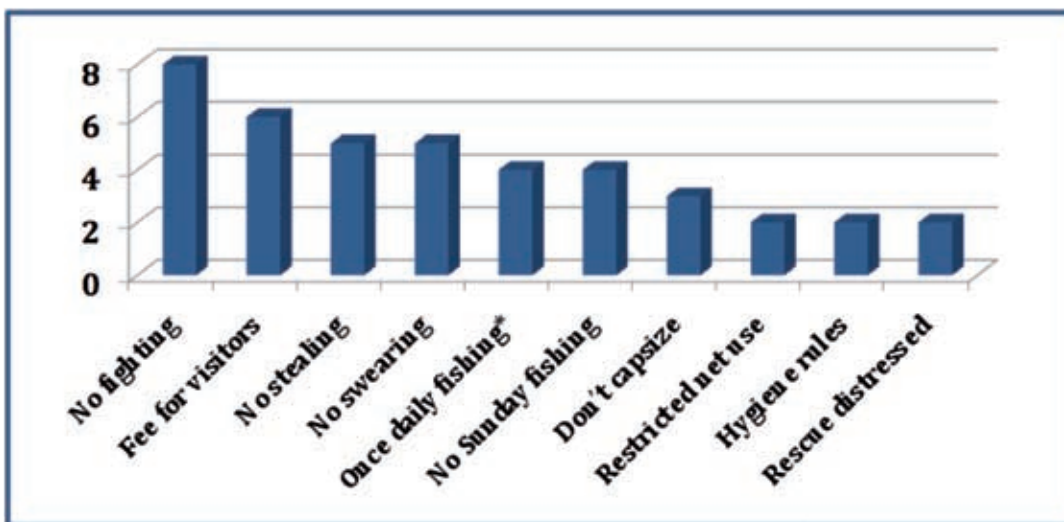
In addition to the general decline in illegal fishing by industrial operators, communities in Grand Cape Mount and West Point noted a complete absence of incursions into the Inshore Exclusion Zone (IEZ) by trawlers since January 2012. In 2011, the Northern areas of Liberia had suffered from night-time incursions of trawlers from neighbouring Sierra Leone. This coincides with the flight of pirate vessels from Southern Sierra Leone in early 2012 following EJF's community surveillance project. In the south of the country, however, reports of incursions by vessels from the Ivory Coast continue. In central Liberia, Marshall and Buchanan noted occasional night-time incursions, though it was unclear whether these were to fish illegally in the IEZ or to land fish covertly to evade taxes.

The World Bank's Community Science project, which operates in six Liberia fishing areas spread along the coast, reported that catches from the sea (though not Lake Piso) appear to be improving following the reduction of trawler activity, though data will need to be collected for several more years for trends to be firmly established.

RECOMMENDATION: The Government of Liberia and local and international partners should maintain and extend activities to prevent and deter illegal industrial fishing. Accurate catch data should be gathered in landing sites to determine if the artisanal fishing effort, in the absence of industrial fishing within the IEZ, is of a sustainable size.

Analysis of Findings: local governance

Every community identified at least one rule that operated locally and governed fisherfolk. Eight rules were found in only one meeting. Those rules that appeared in at least two communities are set out below:



* Note: in four communities, fishing is only allowed once per day during the rainy season.

Two things are immediately evident from the number and nature of rules identified. First, local communities all engage in a degree of local fisheries management, something that can be capitalised on by CMAs. For instance, in many areas the practice of charging visiting fishermen to use local waters anticipates the Liberian Government's plans to introduce Territorial User Rights fisheries through CMAs. Fines and fees were as variable as the rules themselves. Fees for visiting fishermen, for instances, ranged from L\$25 for a season to L\$500 per month. In general, fines were much higher in Fanti communities than in Liberian communities. The lack of uniformity of rules and fines used suggests that they are developed for specific local purposes, and it is important that this is reflected in the local empowerment of CMAs and their members.

Second, the issues regulated are largely low-profile and consensual. Serious issues such as governing the use of illegal nets, that would entail serious economic consequences, have not been addressed by local rule-making. This situation appears to be worsening. Several communities, such as Taylor Kru Town, formally had rules restricting under-18s from fishing but are no longer able to enforce this because of the need of adolescents to earn income to supplement household incomes. This suggests the need to strengthen local institutions and ensure they are backed-up by national enforcement capacity as well as the means to provide compensation to those that suffer from the implementation of new rules.

The level of meaningful activity in the area of fisheries management was normally higher the more local institutions were. Local chiefs—communities usually have both a ‘Town Chief’ and either a ‘Fishing’ or ‘Sea’ Chief—were the main instruments of authority in fisheries management and were responsible for almost all rules mentioned. Chiefs were almost always elected, though some communities had fixed terms whilst others had indefinite terms contingent on good performance. In addition, local government was active in both Robertsport and West Point. In the former, the Superintendent acted mainly as a mediator but was widely respected and appeared to have stopped large, motorised canoes from fishing in Lake Piso. In West Point the Municipality and police were active in the enforcement of local rules, though some suggested this was to collect fines rather than as part of a genuine effort to manage fisheries. The Bureau of National Fisheries’ (BNF) inspectors were only mentioned by one community as a method of enforcement (they stop rotten fish from entering markets in Robertsport Fanti Town). They appear to focus their efforts entirely on collecting licenses (from ocean-going vessels—no licenses are collected in Lake Piso) and ‘sensitising’ communities.

RECOMMENDATION: The Government of Liberia and local and international partners should maintain and extend activities to prevent and deter illegal industrial fishing. Accurate catch data should be gathered in landing sites to determine if the artisanal fishing effort, in the absence of industrial fishing within the IEZ, is of a sustainable size.

RECOMMENDATION: Local authorities and elected chiefs are currently the primary instruments of fisheries management. It is therefore important that they—and not only the Bureau of National Fisheries—assume a formal role within CMAs and are empowered to assist in the enforcement of CMA rules.

Analysis of Findings: Collaborative Management Associations

Both in Grand Cape Mount County, where a nascent CMA already exists, and across Liberia more widely there is almost uniform enthusiasm for the concept of collaborative management. Areas with large Fanti communities see it as a way for different ethnic groups to work together. Areas with mainly Liberian fisherfolk see CMAs as a means for them to become as organised as they perceive Fanti communities and other fishing communities to be in other areas of West Africa. There is a widespread expectation—in part fuelled by the association of CMAs with significant World Bank funding—that the organisations will improve fishing as a livelihood by subsidising inputs and increasing market access.

The progress of collaborative management in the pilot area offers a warning, however. In the Kru area of Robertsport and the peripheral settlements elsewhere in Grand Mount County, enthusiasm for co-management is matched by a fear that the process is being dominated by wealthy fishermen and traders in Robertsport as well as outside funders. There was widespread ignorance of the draft constitution and byelaws and a perception that their communities were being excluded from the process of building the CMA.

RECOMMENDATION: When CMAs are proposed to new areas, it is vital the expectations are carefully managed. High hopes for radically subsidised inputs are unlikely to be met, with the possible exception of nets as part of a one-off exchange, and this should be communicated to prevent disillusionment with CMAs.

RECOMMENDATION: CMAs should resist centripetal forces that tend to concentrate initiatives in administrative centres. Repeated efforts, including constitutional provisions, should be made to ensure all communities are fairly represented, both in the start-up phase and in the consequent permanent body.

Community Responses: Grand Cape Mount

Community Name: Robertsport Fanti Town (6th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

There are 23 permanent medium canoes (5-10 people) and 10 large (10-40 people) canoes. Large canoes fish in dry season and medium-sized canoes fish in the rainy season. Further canoes visit from Monrovia for seasonal fishing.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS (see key on page one):

T: Industrial trawlers were a problem until late 2011.

MN: Already switching over from monofilament nets and say they plan to burn old illegal nets.

FB: Frequently running into Kru nets—Fanti Fishing Chief arranges compensation if Kru can identify vessel responsible.

NT: Fishermen occasionally lose nets and the chief informs other fishermen to look for them.

SL: Navy harasses Fanti boats around Sulima and even on occasion chase them into Liberian waters and ask for payments. SL Navy normally demands L\$30,000 from Fanti boats wanting to fish in SL waters. In March, came as far as Robertsport to arrest three Liberian boats, bringing them back to Sulima to extract payment.

Other: Fanti community constantly having to negotiate with Liberian immigration officers, who ask for more and more money for community members to work in Liberia.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. If there is a problem with an engine on one boat, other boats must assist at sea.
2. When nets come together, disputes must be resolved peacefully, with use of Fishing Chief if needed.
3. Fishermen must return the lost net of another vessel if found.
4. If Kru fishermen identify which Fanti vessel destroyed their nets, the Fanti chief will arrange compensation through the Kru chief.
5. Decided not to go into Lake Piso to fish after intervention of Superintendent. If Fanti are caught going, Fishing Chief will confiscate their nets.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Fishing Chief is elected by a meeting of fishermen. Indefinite term—removed by a vote of fishermen if he no longer is doing a good job. Fishing Chief meets fishermen every two weeks to discuss ongoing issues. It is an old position that existed as long as they can remember.

The government fishing inspector licenses vessels every year (L\$ 7,000 per year). He also periodically patrols the landing site and stops rotten fish from being sold to fish processors. Issues temporary licenses to visiting fishermen from Sierra Leone.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

See CMA as an opportunity to resolve disputes with the Kru communities. Ghanaians already work cooperatively so feel comfortable with the premise of co-management.



Community Name: Robertsport Kru Town (8th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

Smoke fish and sell to traders who come from inland areas to purchase. Some Kru go to surrounding villages from January to April to fish. Approximately 200 fisheries operate in 76 registered vessels, though there were some suggestions that there were also many unregistered canoes.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

- T:** They previously destroyed nets when they did come. Catch improved “four times” since trawlers have stopped coming. None recently.
- MN:** Makes fish rotten, which drives away other fish. No power to stop their use as fishermen will just respond to say “will you feed me if you take my net”.
- FB:** Destroyed nets. Fanti chief only helps with compensation if they can identify vessel, but since this happens at night it is hard for them to do this. Fanti are operating too shallow, increasing chance of net destruction.
- LM:** Canoes are too small and lack machines (engines). Want small Fanti canoes with engines. Want to pay on microcredit.
- LCS:** Have to smoke fish that would otherwise get high price.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. No fighting at sea.
2. If visiting boat comes, they must pay L\$200-300 to chief to stay at landing site.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Go to Kru Fishing Chief and, failing that, Kru Governor if there are disputes. Fishing inspector occasionally visits but does not enforce any rules. He mainly focuses on Fanti. Pay him L\$2-3,000 for annual license. County Superintendent listens to their complaints and then passes them on to Fanti.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Claim there is only one Kru person on the CMA Board of Governors and none on the executive and that they were excluded from the election process. Worried that the CMA officers very rarely visit Kru town. Claim the national WARFP programme told interested Kru people not to apply because they were not qualified, and then prominent officers from other areas of Robertsport applied without formal qualifications.

Feel that they are not told about important CMA workshops and meetings. Claim that things were better before the CMA, when they had a local fishermen’s organisation that was uniting communities. Fanti used to stay at Kru town at rainy season and buy herring from them.

Nonetheless, they have hope that the CMA will agree demarcation between them and Fanti that will stop Fanti boats fishing in the shallow areas where the Kru prefer to operate.



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Community Name: Latia (9th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

Village sits on strip of land between lake and ocean. Residents' livelihoods split between cassava cultivation and fishing in the lake. Occupations are of equal importance. Visitors come to beach from October-March to fish.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

LM: New canoes cost over L\$10,000.

MN: Cause fish to rot. Thread nets too costly, but monofilament nets catch fish much more quickly.

NT: People from other towns steal nets (have to then depend on cassava to survive). Chief will call meeting to tell others, but it is too expensive to chase nets across the lake.

LCS: Cannot get good price for fresh fish and no transport to take fish to market.

PF: Need more eco-stoves—they use less wood and do not hurt eyes.

DY: People from Tosor use dynamite and chemicals when they fish.

LN: Need thread nets to catch big fish, but people cannot afford them, so government must help. Storms can make sea rough.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. Migratory fishermen who break rules not allowed back the following year.
2. No killing sea turtles or taking of their eggs—enforced in last year after sensitisation.
3. Visiting fishermen pay L\$300 to stay per month. Fund goes to community projects (mosque, town hall etc). Also do special collections in town to pay for such projects.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Town Chief elected for indefinite term (as long as he/she does good job in eyes of residents). Paramount Chief lives in Tosor and is occasionally contacted—but he does not change anything and sides with the Tosor people. No interaction with the Superintendent. Bureau Inspector only comes to sensitise—no licensing or rules.

Chief unable to enforce rules on not killing gravid crabs/lobsters because people who break laws do not listen to him. Also has no authority over migratory fishermen. If police are called, migratory fishermen will just move on. Best the chief can do is just not allow same migratory fisherman to settle the following year.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Elected their CMA representatives. People hope CMA will bring better administration. Nobody attended recent CMA constitutional workshop due to lack of transport. Would go to a CMA general assembly if transport provided.



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Community Name: Sembehun (9th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

On strip of land between the ocean and lake. Residents fish in lake using nets and hooks. During dry season, get visitors who stay on beach and fish in ocean (from Monrovia and RP). Women fish in lake in dry season.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

LM: Want to fish in Atlantic but only have small boats and paddles.

LN: Only have monofilament nets but want thread nets with larger mesh to catch valuable fish.

PF: Wood is difficult to find for smoking. Forestry Development Authority (FDA) has declared mountain a reserve so must buy wood from outside areas. Need more eco-stoves.

DY: People from other towns use dynamite in the lake – no power to stop it.

NT: Occasional net theft.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. No fighting.
2. Do not go into local bush to cut wood.
3. No theft.
4. Do not swear.
5. Do not use one finger net in lake. Can fish all year long.
6. In Jaa creek, you can fish just once a year. Old tradition enforced by chief.
7. If you move to town, give bag of fish and ask FDA for permission to build house.

Visitors must listen to rules. Pay L\$500 per month for canoe, L\$1,000 for beach seine. L\$600 fine for offences.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

If Town Chief is unable to enforce rules, refers to Clan Chief, who never refers matters upwards to the Paramount Chief. Bureau inspector comes but only sensitises and collects licenses from visitors on the Atlantic. Superintendent called meeting on DY but it continues.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

WARFP asked for CMA representatives – town picked Community Science volunteer because he had experience. Not aware of details of what the CMA will do, but have hope that it will bring materials and positive benefits. Do not get enough warning of CMA meetings and elections.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Women's leader: "Even the fish themselves, they are suffering. They don't have the proper gear to fish with. Just using second-hand Fanti gear. Women often have to go buy [fish] from Robertsport to smoke."

Democratic Liberia gives people hope – "we used to run away".

If they had to stop fishing in lake, would want to go out into ocean and/or increase cassava farming. Need investment for either. If you just say stop fishing in lake, people will say "but what will you do for me".

Youth leader would like ID cards to facilitate enforcement of rules. On beach, EJF noticed two sea turtle nests that had been protected by sticks. EJF Project Officer congratulated the community, who all applauded.



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Community Name: Tosor (9th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

Population of 542. Young, articulate Town Chief. 10 fishing canoes on the lake. Also farm on an island in the lake that they had lived on during the war. Young men fish and the old men farm. Use hooks and also nets (monofilament, 1-3 fingers). Women fish in dry season.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

MN: Started using after the war when people returned from Monrovia. Thread used to be preferred because you can fix them yourself. But only rubber nets work now because the fish in the lake are small.

DY: People come with permits from government saying that they can use dynamite. When they call police to arrest them, perpetrators are released. Claims police are corrupt and fisherfolk using dynamite come from outside.

Lake Piso Reserve: "We depend on Lake Piso to make our living. There is no other job in this area. But the government has told us to stop fishing in the lake. What are we supposed to do?"

Claim government provides them with nothing—had to build own school with income from lake.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

Those that come to stay have to pay L\$300 per month to fish and sell their catch locally.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Town Chief solves fishing disputes. Can pass problems up to Paramount Chief (his father) if necessary. Send about 10 criminals to RP every year for disputes they cannot resolve locally (all disputes, not just fishing).

Superintendent warned them that they would need to stop fishing in the lake, but they responded that they had to for their livelihoods. FDA patrol the forest and stop people from cutting wood. Inspector comes to sensitise people but undertakes no enforcement.

Views on the CMA:

Represented by Town Chief's brother. Hope the CMA will bring new rules and greater capacity. Will use thread nets if all other communities do, but will stick to MN if not. Happy to attend a general assembly meeting if called.

OTHER COMMENTS:

EJF asked Town Chief to call EJF and the Bureau the next time somebody comes claiming to have a permit to use dynamite. The community is concerned that police are not prosecuting Fanti users of dynamite.



Community Name: Taylor (11th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

38 resident canoes. About 10 further dug-out canoes visiting during dry season from RP (do not pay fee).

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

T: None since 2011, however. Trawlers cover names with green nets.

LN: Need twine nets but they are too expensive.

LM: Want motors for their canoes.

MN: Make fish rotten and cannot fix them, but they are cheap.

SL: On two occasions SL Navy boats came past and harassed canoes. Arrested some in RP to take back to SL.

FB: Pass through their nets and do not pay compensation because nobody sees.

Some SL Mende fishermen are staying near for past two years. Do not observe local “no nets in shallow water” rule. Cut Liberian nets when they get stuck in them. Tensions in general are high between communities.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. No shallow water net fishing (L\$500 fine—SL people ignore rule, though).
2. Do not fight at sea (L\$2,500 fine).
3. No stealing from/of nets (L\$1,500 fine).
4. If you capsize when coming in, pay L\$250 fine.
5. Do not lay fish on the ground (get a warning).

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Sea Chief and Town Chief enforce above laws. If problem is very serious, it goes to the Robertsport Fishing Chief. Pay licenses to the Inspector once a year.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Aware of net exchange—concerned that it won’t include beach seines.

Town elders appointed town’s CMA representative.

Aware everyone must join the CMA but hadn’t heard about fees. Still hopeful that CMA and “World Bank” “will do good for us”. If there is a General Assembly meeting, some will need to stay behind to guard the town.

OTHER COMMENTS:

WQuestions posed: “What do we do if we catch turtles and they are already dead – can’t we eat them?” “We can’t eat their eggs?” “We can’t eat crabs with eggs even if crab is dead?”



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Community Name: Taylor Kru Town (11th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

44 canoes—all dug-out, using hooks and nets. Use rubber (MN) net but would prefer twine, but it is expensive.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

- T:** Last seen in December [year].
- FB:** Do not see the particular canoes at night that cut their nets so cannot claim for compensation. If Fanti boats help locals with a rescue, they ask for fuel money.
- SE:** During the rainy season, land is eroded.
- MN:** Not as good as twine nets, but it is much cheaper.
- LM:** Want ‘machines’ for their canoes.
- LCS:** Little profit for fishmongers due to poor market access.
- LN:** Feel government should supply them with legal nets.
- SL:** Navy comes into Liberia to take fees from fishermen.
- PF:** Want more eco-stoves as their current one is damaged.
Want raincoats and IDs that identify them as fishermen.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. No children under 10 at landing site.
 2. No fights at landing site (L\$500 fine) or at sea (L\$1,500 fine).
 3. No capsizing the boat (L\$500 fine).
 4. You must rescue a fisherman in distress (L\$2,500 fine).
 5. No stealing (L\$1,000 fine plus public humiliation).
 6. No abusive language (L\$1,000 fine).
 7. No disrespect to the chief (boat pulled in for several days if you do).
 8. Fishing visitors from Robertsport pay L\$25 to land at their beach.
- Used to strictly enforce no fishing by under 18s, but teenagers now regularly fish.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Have a “Sea Board” with a Sea Chief, Treasurer and Secretary. Handle fines and fees. No interaction with Paramount Chief or the police.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Held public meeting to select representative and chose chief and women’s leader because “they are trusted”.
“By the grace of God” the CMA will bring change.
Hope it will bring motors for boats, cold storage and fishing nets.

OTHER COMMENTS:

No school or hospital in town—high levels of anger at government as a result.



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Community Responses: Other counties in Liberia

Community Name: West Point Kru Town (13th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

Over 100 dug-out canoes. Catch is good in dry season but poor in the rainy season. Prefer thread net to monofilament, but the former is too expensive to purchase.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

LM: Cannot go far to sea without engines.

LCS: Get poor price for fish because it has to be smoked.

FB: Difficult to get compensation for broken net if do not see perpetrator.

BS: Seine used by small Togolese community 'hurts' the fish.

SE: Large section of Kru area recently flooded in a heavy storm. Have not rebuilt on that area.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. Do not tamper with the nets of others.
2. No stealing at sea.
3. Only fish once a day during the rainy season (traditional rule).
4. No fighting.

Rules now rarely enforced due to inactive Fishing Chief.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Fishing Chief and fishing council serve indefinite terms. Municipality recently arrested people for defecating on the beach. When the police come to enforce rules, they can be arbitrary and just fine those involved L\$1,000 and keep funds rather than taking serious efforts to resolve the dispute.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

They are ready for a CMA. Used to fight at sea with Fanti, but started meeting constructively 10 years ago. Relations very close since a four-day prayer meeting was held with members of both communities last year.

OTHER COMMENTS:

The area's "Chief Investigator" spoke to EJJ following the meeting and said that the Chief is widely disliked because he spends all his time fishing and does not engage in dispute resolution. As a consequence, disputes are now all going to the Municipality for resolution. Only about 5% paid license fee last year because chief has not organised fishermen. Will be a debate soon to decide whether or not to remove the chief.



Community Name: West Point Fanti Town (13th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

About 150 canoes (half medium-sized with about 10 fishermen, half with 30 or more). Large canoes go out in dry season, small in rainy season. In dry season, some go to Robertsport and even as far as Sulima and Freetown. Used to be more Ghanaian vessels based in Liberia before fuel prices went up. Prefer thread nets but they are expensive. Some Fanti fisherman born in Ghana, others in Liberia. Former normally retire in Ghana.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

T: Want cameras to document them. Have heard twin trawlers want to come back.

LM/LN: Have to bring nets, boats and motors from Ghana. No boat building infrastructure in Liberia.

LCS: Fish die because of lack of cold storage.

FP: Price of gasoline is killing profit margin—is subsidised in Ivory Coast and Ghana.

No longer strong tensions with Kru community (as there were before). If there is an issue now, “they settle it as one family”.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. If somebody dies, everyone helps to look after family.
2. Must assist canoe in distress (L\$10,000 fine).
3. No cursing or fighting (L\$5,000 fine).
4. If government says there is a Presidential visit or election, Chief can ban fishing that day.
5. Visiting fishermen see chief and pay one-off L\$500 fee to elders.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Fishing Chief is elected and serves indefinitely. Any rules made by Municipality are communicated to fishermen, but they see Bureau Inspectors rarely other than for collection of license fees.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Ready for CMA if it comes because they now have a good relationship with other communities.

OTHER COMMENTS:

If they catch shark, sell body to fishmongers and sell fins to Liberian businessmen who pay \$35-40 per kg.



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Community Name: Buchanan Kru (15th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

163 dug-out canoes across five landing sites. Mostly monofilament but want twine nets.
Use hooks as well as nets with 1-5 finer mesh size.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

T: Still coming at night within the six nautical mile limit. Throw back by-catch which pollutes the water.
FB: Sometimes come to areas where Liberian fishermen have nets and set their nets too close. Kru chief will take issue up with Fanti Governor with mixed results. Some cases of net destruction.

DY and chemicals:

Liberian fishermen use DY in rivers. Fanti also use it at sea. Comes from West Point.

MN: Small mesh size. Kills juveniles and leaves fish to rot at sea.

BS: River people are using seine in river, where it kills indiscriminately.

Want life jackets.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. If you come from another town, report to the Chief (no payment, though).
2. If canoe circles you with their net they have to give you L\$1,500 (rarely enforced, though).
3. No Sunday fishing (L\$1,000 fine).
4. Do not capsize (L\$500 fine).
5. Only fish once a day (canoe is seized for several days if rule broken).
6. Only swim if clean (L\$500 fine).
7. Use flash light to identify boat at night (L\$500 fine).

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Do not like the idea of paying licenses into the central government account. Fishing Chief says that the government does nothing for them so why pay? Prefer to pay into Bureau account because they know and trust the Inspector. Bureau sensitises people, facilitates NGO activities and resolves disputes.

Fishing Chief is elected for four year terms by the fishermen. County and city play no role in fisheries management.

Views on the CMA:

Confused by respective role of LAFA and CMA. Hope they work closely together. Ready for CMA and will come together as communities to take part.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Strongly distrust an individual who used to work for the FAO. He is accused of stealing donor funds and investing them in his own fishing operations. Worried that he will be hired by WARFP to run the CMA. "If you don't want problems, don't bring [that man] here". LAFA is well organised in Buchanan and has an office. Fishermen hope it will give them a voice in government.



Community Name: Buchanan Fanti Town (15th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

136 set net canoes (2-4 people) and 33 ring net canoes (10-25 people). Former use monofilament and latter more likely to use twine. Occasionally catch sharks and sell their fins.

Major problems faced by fishers:

T: Still come at night.

SE: Erosion is displacing fishing communities.

FP: Gasoline is expensive—need government subsidy.

LN/LM: Cannot find in Buchanan, so need to buy from Ghana and Ivory Coast.

Agree that fishing around Kru boats and breaking their nets is a problem. Say Kru fishermen also sometimes take fish from the Fanti nets, however.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. No Sunday fishing (L\$5,000 fine).
2. Don't throw net onto another net (L\$500-1,000 fine).
3. DY and chemicals are banned—nobody ever been caught.
4. No fishing on the day of a funeral.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Same as Buchanan Kru above.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Ready for CMA if it comes because they now have a good relationship with other communities.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Think it will be good. Community links already strong—expect the Kru chief will be the Chairman.



Community Name: Marshall City (17th March 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

45 Kru boats and 24 Fanti boats. Most of these canoes are using monofilament nets especially for demersal fishing. The Kru fishermen land at the beach while the Fanti land in the river.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

MN: Nets are widely used, but they are willing to take part in exchange if government helps.

LM/LN: Need both better nets and boats and engines.

DY: Use is on the increase.

T: Still come sometimes at night but very rare.

LCS/PF: Struggle to get value from fish that they catch.

FP: Fuel is very expensive in Liberia.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. Absolutely no Sunday fishing.
2. Only fish once a day during pike (rainy) season.
3. No fighting and using vulgar language on the beach.
4. No stealing.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Both chiefs are elected by a local 'general assembly' and still in power according to work performance.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Would want a CMA established so that the local government and the fishermen can work together. They also pray for Robertsport CMA to be successful.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Want government to subsidize fishing inputs to encourage investors.



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Community Name: Grand Cess City (22nd April 2012)

BASIC DETAILS:

62 dug-out canoes and one 'Fanti' boat. Most of these canoes are using monofilament nets, especially during herring fishing period from August to November. They also have hooks and lines. Some have 15 horsepower engine. The fishermen are all Kru landing at the beach.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERS:

MN: Not willing to turn over the old illegal nets to the government despite warnings that they will have to.

LM/LN: Need canoes, nets and machines.

T: Come from 9:00pm to 6:00am about three times a week.

PF: Want eco-stoves for fish smoking.

FP: Fuel is very expensive.

FB: Semi-industrial boats coming from Ghana and Ivory Coast are causing problem; fishing without licence and stealing their fish.

RULES DEvised BY THE COMMUNITY:

1. No Sunday fishing.
2. Cannot fish twice in same day during rainy season.
3. No fighting or swearing.
4. No stealing.

AREAS OF GOVERNANCE:

Chiefs (sea and town) are elected by a local general assembly and remain in power according to performance.

VIEWS ON THE CMA:

Want a CMA established to improve local cooperation.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Want government to subsidize nets, boats and fuel.



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