



JOURNALIST CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS

2020-2023





Protecting People and Planet

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The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) exists to protect the natural world and defend our basic human right to a secure environment.

EJF works internationally to inform policy and drive systemic, durable reforms to protect our environment and defend human rights. We investigate and expose abuses and support environmental defenders, Indigenous peoples, communities, and independent journalists on the frontlines of environmental injustice. Our campaigns aim to secure peaceful, equitable and sustainable futures.

Our investigators, researchers, filmmakers, and campaigners work with grassroots partners and environmental defenders across the globe.

Our work to secure environmental justice aims to protect our global climate, ocean, forests, and wildlife and defend basic human rights.



Introduction:

Central to EJF's core missions is the facilitation and delivery of training and capacity building for environmental defenders, activists and journalists around the world, enabling them to better investigate and report on and advocate against environmental crimes and the associated human rights abuses.

Since our inception, over two decades ago, EJF has focused on this core part of our mission, providing bespoke field-based investigative skills to groups of environmental defenders committed to exposing environmental crimes such as wildlife trafficking and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. At the same time we have worked to support journalists to report on these critical issues across multiple geographies and jurisdictions.

This briefing summarises some of these projects, whilst also highlighting some of the challenges faced by journalists in the geographies that EJF has worked in since 2020.

| Global footprint for journalist training

Since 2020 EJF has conducted projects focused on the training and capacity building of journalists in five different countries; Cameroon, Ghana, Indonesia, Liberia and Somalia. The exact activities conducted in each country are varied but they broadly follow the same theme of providing bespoke knowledge dissemination on combating IUU fishing and other environmental issues through improved access and awareness of the topic, as well as training on how to expose these crimes in the respective geographies.





Cameroon: 2023

“I can’t say that I’m already an expert on the subject, but the knowledge I’ve acquired already gives me a basis. This course has inspired a lot of interest in the subject from my fellow journalists here. I would like to thank the organisers for making this training possible”.

Journalist B trained in Cameroon (2023).

IUU fishing poses a major threat to Cameroon’s fisheries but it remains a poorly documented and reported issue in the country. Its local impacts are yet to be brought to public attention despite its visible consequences on the country’s environment and Cameroon’s social fabric and economy.

In 2023, 14 journalists from key digital and print media outlets received training from EJF (including field-based operations), in Cameroon’s Southern Region, giving them access to EJF’s expert researchers and campaigners, as well as to local fishers who are directly affected by illegal fishing. The objective of this training was to develop a deeper and broader understanding of fishing activities, and the cumulative impact of overfishing and IUU fishing on coastal communities and the environment.

EJF has set up a digital network for Cameroonian journalists to share tips, advice and stories with one another, in French and English. Several months after the training session, the network is still active and has recently added a fifteenth journalist.

The aim of the project was to contribute to amplifying the inter-connected issues around IUU fishing, attracting public attention and stimulating government actions which will ultimately deliver transparency, coastal conservation and justice for the communities in Cameroon. Unprecedented media coverage of fisheries issues was recorded after the training, including by major Cameroonian media outlets^{1/2/3}.

“This training will equip me to produce high-quality investigative work”.

Journalist C trained in Cameroon (2023).



A journalist filming at Mboa Manga landing site. © EJF



Journalist capacity building workshop meeting. © EJF



Ghana: 2021 – 2023

Across the West African sub-region, fisheries play an important role sustaining livelihoods and providing for millions of people. However, the region is plagued by IUU fishing, poor enforcement of fisheries laws, inconsistent policies, misalignment of fisheries laws with international treaties, poor living and working conditions for fishers, and piracy.

Under EJF's Oak Foundation and Oceans 5 funded "Improving Fisheries Governance" (IFG) Project in Ghana and the wider sub-region, one of the objectives is to inform and increase knowledge of the fisheries sector through media outreach. In the first year (2021) of the project, 15 journalists belonging to the Journalist for Responsible Fisheries and the Environment (JFRE) network in Ghana were trained on fisheries to facilitate future investigations and reporting.^{4,5}

In 2022, the IFG project expanded its scope to cover journalists from six West African sub-region member states. Five journalists from Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin and Nigeria as well as the seven journalists from Ghana (who received training in the first year) attended.^{6,7,8,9,10}

In October 2022, the IFG project also teamed up with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to organise a workshop for 25 journalists in Accra to educate them on the 8.7 Accelerator Lab Initiative, which aims to accelerate progress on the elimination of child labour and the eradication of forced labour by optimizing the effectiveness of development cooperation interventions. The training workshop focused on labour challenges and decent work in the fisheries sector.

In January 2023, three journalists from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire were invited to attend the 14th Conference of FCWC Ministers in Ghana to cover the conference and report in real time to the public and fisheries stakeholders in the sub-region.

The Improving Fisheries Governance (IFG) Project is aimed at strengthening government and industry commitments to improving fisheries governance in several key policy areas: enhanced transparency, law enforcement, collaborative management and capacity of key stakeholders in Ghana and the West African sub region.

"With this West African training, as Ghanaian journalists we will collaborate from colleagues from the sub-region to undertake investigative pieces in the sector to ensure the safety and wellbeing of local crews working on industrial trawlers"

Kingsley Nana Buadu, Executive Director, Journalists for Responsible Fisheries & Environment, JRFE.

“This training has exposed me to a number of issues in the sector, especially in the sub-region. When I get back to Liberia I will place a lot of importance on fisheries issues. I will find more answers to the questions gathered here through the training and presentations.”

Saywhar Gbaa, Journalist, Ecowas Radio, Liberia.



A monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) expert explains to journalists how vessels are monitored and tracked in the West African sub-region. © EJF



West African journalists are taken on a tour of Tema fishing harbour to gather first hand information about Ghana's fishing sector. © EJF



Indonesia: 2021 – 2023

EJF engaged with a number of partners in this project including the Environmental Reporting Collective (ERC) and two local media outlets, Kantor Berita Radio (KBR) and TEMPO Institute (TI). These collaborations facilitated the planning and hosting of four online webinars and two in-person journalist capacity building workshops in Manado, Sulawesi and Jayapura, Papua. In total 149 journalists received training through the project.

Each webinar consists of three *Sessions*. *Session 1* consisted of a seminar presented by experts in the relevant field or on a particular environmental crime, *Session 2* covered investigative methodologies relevant to that environmental crime, and *Session 3* provided an opportunity for journalists to pitch their story ideas to a panel of judges. One ‘champion’ journalist was chosen from each of the four webinars to receive a story grant from EJF in order to complete their chosen field investigation.

As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic weakened, EJF and TI set about hosting two in-person workshops with the first taking place in Manado city, North Sulawesi (March 2022) and the second conducted in Jayapura city, Papua (October 2022). The workshops were attended by 16 and 11 journalists from local media outlets respectively. 16 of these journalists were men and 11 journalists were women. One champion journalist was selected from each of these workshops to conduct their chosen field investigation.

Each of the six champions received a story grant from EJF to plan and conduct their chosen field investigation. They also received mentoring from senior journalists from the TEMPO Media Group. This mentorship covered the whole process from planning through to writing and publication. These investigations covered damage to coral reefs in the North Natuna Sea region (Northwest of Kalimantan), shark and ray trade along the north coast of Central Java, illegal trans-shipment activities in Bitung and North Maluku waters, shark and ray trade along the border of Indonesia and Philippines, mangrove deforestation in Bintuni Bay, West Papua, and conversion of mangrove forests into new developments in Youtefa Bay, Jayapura City.

A total of 149 journalists received training through this project with 23 articles being successfully published by eight media outlets. EJF and TI hosted a final in-person dissemination/closing event in March 2023 which invited all six champion journalists to present their findings to an audience consisting of representatives from the US Embassy in Jakarta, Government of Indonesia Ministries, civil society and student journalist associations.

EJF also produced a dedicated Journalist Investigation Training Manual (in collaboration with TEMPO Institute) which contains resources and guidelines for Indonesian journalists who want to conduct investigative activities on environmental crimes (Available in both Indonesian¹¹ and English¹²). It is hoped that this document can serve as a set of guidelines for Indonesian journalists who are either well experienced or completely new to conducting investigations into environmental issues.



Abdus Somad is a journalist working for the small local news agency, jaring.id. He registered and took part in EJF's journalist training program in September 2021 and was chosen as a 'champion' to receive a story grant from EJF to conduct his field investigation.

Somad submitted a proposal for an investigation into the shark and ray trade across the north coast of Central Java province. The target was to expose how sharks and rays are caught and finned and to find out where the fins were traded.

The investigation took place in November 2021 and it was found that many sharks and rays were landed every day in the ports of Tegal, Rembang and Juwana. Several large companies and local collectors were found to be buying the fins and selling them to a company in Jakarta. However, further proof is required to verify the fins' arrival in Jakarta and their onward journey.

Based on interviews with government officials, Somad was able to confirm his findings and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries acknowledged there were elements of weakness in monitoring and enforcement. His investigative report was published in January 2022 on local online media. A few days after publication he was contacted by a finance ministry official, asking to confirm the findings on the estimated number of shark fins being traded and exported. The suspicion was that the true figure was much higher, indicating that illegal smuggling might be taking place.

This investigative lead has spurred Somad to conduct a renewed investigation into the shark and ray trade in Indonesia with a focus on revealing the true trade flows from the upstream stakeholders through to the downstream companies either in Indonesia or abroad. EJF provided Somad with a new story grant in August 2023 to facilitate the planning and implementation of this new and expanded investigation.

"I got a lot of learning opportunities from this training and it has helped me develop my capacity as a journalist who is still new to maritime affairs and the environment. From this knowledge I will share with fellow journalists and my editorial room so that they can learn together in making reports on marine-environmental crimes."

Abdus Somad, Champion journalist under EJF's INL project, Indonesia (2021).





Liberia: 2021 – 2022

The fisheries industry in Liberia is a vital source of natural resources and an important contributor to the national economy, food security, and rural livelihoods. It provides direct employment and income to over 33,000 people, including 11,000 fishers. Fish is a primary source of protein for 80% of the population. However, overfishing and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing pose a serious threat to the sustainability of fish populations. Unfortunately, media coverage of these issues is limited, and coastal communities are often excluded from fisheries governance and decision-making processes.

In 2021 and 2022, EJF trained journalists and editors from key radio, electronic and print media from Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Cape Mount, and Grand Bassa counties and facilitated visits to fishing communities to interact with local fishers and experience their stories first-hand. The goal of this training was to establish a network of journalists interested in reporting on fisheries and enhance their understanding of the industry, its significance to food security, and the consequences of unsustainable fishing practices on coastal communities' livelihoods. To foster collaboration and information sharing, EJF established an active WhatsApp platform for these journalists.

The project aims to build a strong, cohesive and inclusive approach where the beneficiaries of resource management are incentivised to both act against illegal and unsustainable activities and work collaboratively towards greater sustainability, transparency and good governance, ultimately resulting in reductions in illegal fishing. Despite the controlled media landscape and a lack of support to cover fisheries stories, one journalist has been able to brave the odds, source and published two stories in China Dialogue and Mongabay.

“In my almost 10 years as a journalist in Liberia, I was never fond of fisheries-related reporting. This might have been so because I had little information about the sector. But when I attended EJF’s journalist for fisheries training everything changed. My knowledge of what the sector looks like and how it contributes to the overall economy of Liberia increased. This gave me the appetite for an increased focus on the sector. I have since authored several articles not only in Liberia but in some internationally acclaimed media outlets like Mongabay and China Dialogue.”

Edward Blamo, trained in Liberia (2021).



Presentation of story ideas and challenges in fisheries reporting. © EJF



A fishing community in Liberia. © EJF



Somalia: 2023

Journalist training is the core activity that EJF has engaged in in its efforts to raise awareness about IUU fishing infractions in Somalian waters. EJF has partnered with Radio Daljir, a local media based in Puntland actively covering IUU fishing news from coastal areas. An initial field trip to the Bari region of northeast Somalia was conducted in December 2021 - January 2022 to discuss potential partnerships with local journalists and provide basic camera training to several Radio Daljir staff members.

As a result of this field trip, EJF decided to expand its journalist training operations with an initial pilot workshop in Bosaso held between the 12th - 15th June 2023. This workshop brought together eight journalists and environmental activists from across the Bari region to equip them with skills and knowledge in journalism and to discuss shared concerns in their respective villages.

The workshop was structured into presentations in the mornings and hands-on sessions (including two field trips) in the afternoons. Morning sessions covered a general introduction to journalism and covered ethics, environmental journalism, and key challenges, explaining the importance of media in environmental crime investigation, policy change, and the role of journalism in creating environmental awareness.

Journalists also learnt about safety and security measures in the field and at sea, discussing risk assessment techniques, self-protection, and how to identify potential risks, risk management actions, and key security issues that are relevant to Somalia. They were advised on how to exercise a careful balance between remaining safe and completing their field assignments. Afternoon sessions covered a wide variety of hands-on activities such as camera handling, tripod settings, mock interviews, and shooting still photos and videos in the field. After each hands-on session instructors reviewed footage and gave participants tips to improve their shooting skills.

Two of the journalists were chosen based on their learning progress, as evaluated by instructors, and the geographical locations chosen for their investigations. They were provided with basic journalism equipment (including cameras and tripods) as a result of this workshop. As of August 2023, they have already reported IUU fishing activities from key areas where foreign fishing vessels have a continued presence.



Photo of a Chinese-flagged fishing trawler taken south of the Bari region coastal village El Dhidar by a journalist from Radio Daljir provided with camera equipment by EJF. The vessel is part of a prolific Chinese distant water fishing fleet that EJF have been investigating since 2021. Investigations utilising locally gathered intelligence such as this photo as well as social media analysis of the fleet have found substantial evidence of IUU fishing in areas reserved for local fishers as well as human rights abuses against crew members.

EJF has begun exploring additional media outlet engagements in Somalia with Astaan Media, SYL Somali TV, and Puntland Post. EJF is exploring collaborations with these agencies to boost environmental issue reporting, stories utilising field investigations, and documentary films intended to raise awareness of IUUF issues to both domestic and international audiences. We plan to conduct additional journalist training workshops over the coming months with these agencies.



Faarax Guuleed is a community activist from Gumbah village, Bari region, and has recently taken up journalism. He has extensive local knowledge and a deep understanding of environmental problems in the region including illegal fishing, deforestation due to charcoal production and illegal wildlife trade.

Faarax attended EJF's capacity building workshop and was especially interested in learning more about camera operations, Canon camera handling techniques and filming using GoPro cameras.

Since the workshop Faarax has been actively sending photos and sharing situation updates on an almost daily basis. He engages frequently with EJF campaigners and is an active member of the information exchange network that EJF helped set up.

"This workshop has been a fantastic opportunity to learn about journalism and get hands-on training on digital cameras. The training and equipment provided by EJF has enabled me to be the voice of my community to report their needs and share our concerns about environmental problems with Somalis and people around the world. I will use these skills to document the social, economic, and environmental impacts of illegal fishing and drought events in the coastal areas."

Faarax Guuleed, trained by EJF in June 2023.

| Pros and cons of capacity building projects from EIJ perspective:

Advantages	Disadvantages
Exposing opaque practices and holding officials, individuals, and corporations to account.	Reporting on environmental crimes is a high-risk assignment for journalists who face higher likelihood of harm than normal.
Trusted and respected means of addressing lack of awareness about issues.	Training in meeting rooms alone is unlikely to lead to effective reporting on environmental crimes.
Media reporting on environmental abuses can play a role in crime prevention, and helps citizens and stakeholders along the supply chain making informed decisions (e.g., consumption behaviour).	Perceived associated costs with conducting field-based activities provides a strong disincentive for editors to approve investigations.
Mapping the potential new generation of activists (regeneration) by conducting training in the specific remote areas.	Editors not willing to provide space for fisheries stories because fisheries issues are not deemed important.
Covering geographical areas that are not reached by other parties and becoming a medium for opening new networks with local stakeholders, including facilitating greater collaboration between journalists to share stories and tips on IUU fishing and other issues.	Journalists lack experience, knowledge, resources resulting in delays to reporting.
Increase in media reportage and programs on fisheries, making fisheries a topical issue in the respective countries.	

| Challenges faced by journalists looking to cover environmental crimes:

Across the five different countries in which EJF has introduced new journalist training and capacity building projects in the last three years, there are a number of common challenges that journalists can face when it comes to reporting on environmental crimes. These include:

Lack of awareness of environmental issues amongst journalists and/or news editors:

In countries where environmental education or awareness of environmental issues is low, it can sometimes be difficult for journalists to gain access to existing materials, subject matter and initial findings of environmental crimes. A lack of awareness at the editor level within news agencies can also hamper reporting efforts as editors may not attach the same value to a story on environmental crime due to a perceived lack of importance or urgency.

Suppression of media reporting by government ministries, business interests:

Environmental crimes can be committed by a variety of different actors including individuals but also companies or even large conglomerates. Local, regional or national policy makers may also be involved if regulations are being circumvented. This makes reporting on environmental crimes prone to suppression (sometimes violently) by implicated parties to avoid their crimes from being brought to light. For example in Liberia, a news article on EJF website¹³ about fishers' use of EJF's mobile IUU monitoring and report app was criticised by the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority, who threatened to shut down EJF in Liberia.¹⁴

Lack of financial resources and support by media outlets to report on environmental crimes:

Environmental crimes can take place in extremely remote and difficult to access locations (i.e., far out at sea, or deep in inaccessible rainforests). This is because environmental crime thrives in the absence of transparency and official scrutiny. This remoteness makes it both difficult to identify these locations as well as to conduct subsequent field-based investigations in these areas. It can also be extremely costly both in terms of money and time to conduct field-based investigations - costs that media agencies are often averse to spend.

Lack of trust between journalists and competent authorities:

Journalists and government officials alike have reported to EJF that there is often a sense of mistrust between both parties when it comes to reporting on environmental crimes. This mistrust may arise from the sensitivities of exposing environmental crimes, the far-reaching political and public backlash that might arise from such crimes being brought to light, and the perception that journalists might seek to accuse officials of complicity in negligence, dereliction of duty or corruption.

“Environmental journalism is not encouraged in Cameroon and there is no dedicated funding for environmental journalism within our media to enable us to go out and do investigations and reports”

Journalist A trained in Cameroon (2023).

| How has EJF mitigated disadvantages in the past?

1) High-risk assignments:

During EJF's training programs, there is always a dedicated and substantive section on the risks of environmental reporting both during the planning, field-work and writing phases of an investigation. EJF provides bespoke training for how to keep journalists, fixers, informants, interviewees and other stakeholders safe in the field. This extends to cyber security as well, covering data protection, hacking attacks, and more. EJF resources provided to journalists also provide extensive tips on how to keep themselves safe during investigations.

It should be noted that EJF does not require trainee journalists to undertake field investigations if they do not wish to do so. All field investigations are conducted voluntarily and with the full informed consent of the journalists involved. EJF will always prioritise the safety and security of its staff, trainees, informants, interviewees and other stakeholders.

2) Training implementation:

Whenever possible, EJF favours training journalists out in the field rather than in meeting rooms. This is essential for translating the theoretical knowledge of expert presentations and EJF training sessions into practical skills, especially around using cameras, video cameras and drones. EJF anticipates that its practical field skills will only keep on growing as its efforts to train journalists continue to expand.

3) Associated costs:

EJF always ensures that projects include appropriate funding for journalist training right from their formulation. This includes funds to cover the planning, field-work and writing phases of the journalistic process. EJF hopes that through ongoing training programs across West Africa and Southeast Asia, journalists and editors alike will appreciate that field investigation costs can be reduced, making them a viable opportunity to extract information in the future.

4) Editors not willing to support environmental reporting:

EJF focuses its training on the journalists themselves but does also provide encouragement and resources to editors to endorse further reporting on environmental issues. It is hoped that through the stories that have been published as a result of EJF's training programs in recent years that more editors will attach tangible value to further field trips and further environmental reporting by their journalists.

5) Journalists are ill-equipped, lack knowledge resulting in delays:

EJF acknowledges that journalists will have different experience, knowledge and resource levels before they conduct a field investigation. EJF has mitigated this risk in the past by ensuring that journalists with different experience levels are provided with tailored opportunities and story grants that suit them. For example, well-experienced journalists may be given a story grant that covers them for 6-12 months whereas novice journalists may be provided with a story grant that covers them for just three months.

EJF also mitigates this risk by asking journalists to enter into a contract with EJF and also by splitting its story grants into three tranche payments. In order to receive the next tranche of funds, the journalist must complete a set of pre-agreed tasks. This might involve submitting a well-planned risk assessment and field investigation plan to EJF before funds can be released.

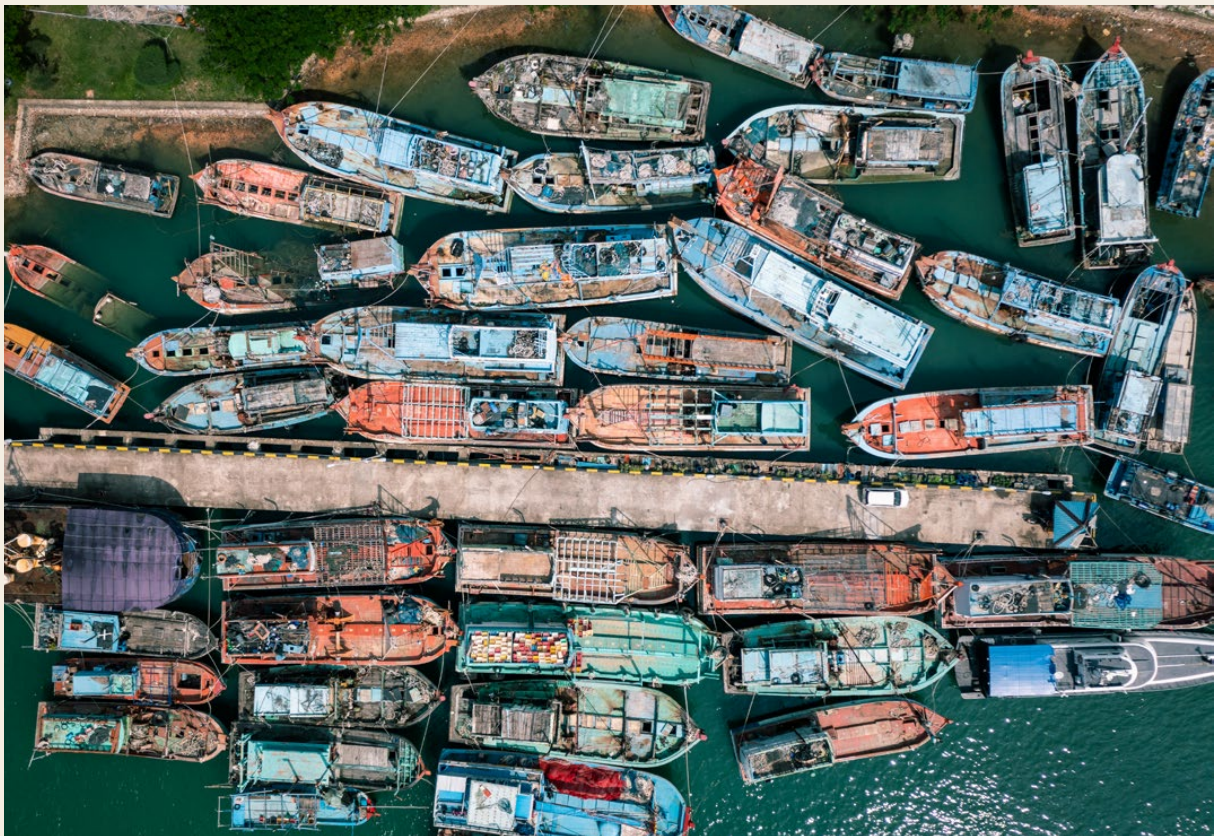
| Next steps for further EJF journalist training around the world:

Indonesia (in progress - 2024):

Based on the success of the recent INL-funded journalist capacity building project EJF has set about working with a number of former trainee journalists to expand their reporting on key environmental issues, including illegal shark and ray product trade and IUU fishing by Vietnamese fishing vessels. EJF has supported these journalists through the provision of story grants that cover expanded field-based investigations for at least two journalists (as of August 2023) as well as providing ongoing technical investigations support where needed. This work has been funded by the Aegis Charitable Trusts.

Indonesia (tentatively 2024-2025):

EJF has submitted a new project proposal to the US Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to expand its recent journalist capacity building project for a further two years. The work would set out to conduct at least 10 training workshops and provision of story grants to at least 17 different journalists of different expertise levels and story ideas.



A port in Batam, Indonesia is littered with impounded Vietnamese fishing vessels caught for IUU fishing in Indonesian waters. EJF is conducting a range of followup investigations with some of its previously trained champion journalists in Indonesia. These include expanded investigations into illegal vessel intrusions by Vietnamese vessels. © EJF

Senegal (tentatively October 2023):

The fisheries of Senegal are some of the most abundant in the West African region. However, IUU fishing and overcapacity in the country's industrial fleet are precipitating the collapse of Senegal's artisanal fisheries. The critical lack of transparency in fisheries management in the country is contributing to this situation. To help reverse this situation, EJF will conduct a training workshop focusing on the need for transparency and the impacts of IUU fishing for at least 10 Senegalese journalists in October 2023. This training will be funded by Ocean 5 and the Oak Foundation.

South-West Indian Ocean countries (tentatively 2023-2024):

EJF has submitted a new project proposal to the US Department of State Global Engagement Center that would provide funding for at least two training workshops for journalists (among other activities) on the tools and information sources that they can use to report on IUU fishing.

Thailand (tentatively 2024-2026):

EJF has recently submitted a funding proposal, jointly with the Oikos Foundation, to the European Delegation in Bangkok for a journalist capacity building project that will focus on reporting on climate change and related environmental issues. The work would set out to conduct at least six training workshops and provide story grants to at least 45 different journalists of different expertise levels and story pitches.

Liberia (September 2023):

EJF will support three journalists with story grants to investigate and produce articles, videos and/or radio programmes on IUU fishing in Liberian waters; the importance of the small-scale fisheries sector to livelihoods and food security; current threats to the future of the sector; the importance of community-led management initiatives to secure sustainable fisheries for Liberian fishing counties; challenges to traditional rights of access to fishing grounds and landing sites, conflicts at sea and competition for resources; and the role of transparency and stakeholder participation in fisheries management and governance.

Ghana (2023 -2025):

EJF will, under the Norad funded Sustainable Oceans Project (SOP), provide a series of training and support to 30 journalists and engage the media to report on illegal activities and prosecutions in the fisheries sector and investigate corruption. Alongside these training events, EJF will also issue a call for story grant proposals focused on responsible fishing practices, illegal fishing practices, human rights abuses, vessel and beneficial ownership, fisheries transparency, tenure rights issues and management practices, among others. Journalists or grant awardees will produce articles, features, documentaries, radio and TV programmes to highlight the aforementioned issues.

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- 3 Défis Actuels (3rd July 2023) Pêche illicite : le Cameroun perd plus de 20 milliards de FCFA par an (No. 782)
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- 14 Anon. (2021) 'Liberia: National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority Debunks Environmental Justice Foundation', Front Page Africa, 8 June, <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/front-slider/liberia-national-fisheries-and-aquaculture-authority-debunks-environmental-justice-foundation/>

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