

# COMMUNITIES FOR FISHERIES

## ISSUE BRIEF

### Project update: July to December 2023



Project funded by the European Union

## Introduction

The European Union-funded Communities for Fisheries project aims to create skilled, capable, and effective community co-management associations (CMAs) to secure legal and sustainable fisheries in Liberia. Its objective is to reduce illegal fishing and improve the sustainability of fisheries by expanding and strengthening CMAs, creating adequate capacity for community monitoring and ensuring effective reporting of illegal fishing.

This brief provides an update on the project's activities implemented during the second half of Year Four, July to December 2023.



Implemented by



In partnership with



## Highlights

- Three new Collaborative Management Associations were established in Grand Kru and Grand Cape Mount Counties in Liberia.
- Two new research reports were published on small-scale fisheries governance and gender inclusion and economic vulnerability in Liberia.
- Participants of the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) raised over US\$95,000.



Presentation of certificate of induction to Region III CMA Treasurer, Tailor, Grand Cape Mount County

## Three new fisheries CMA established; Grand Bassa CMA office officially handed over to the community.

The third-year implementation plan called for the establishment of new CMAs. Since the West Africa Regional Fisheries Project established the first CMA in Grand Cape Mount County in 2019, the leadership has been inactive due to several reasons, including a lack of financial resources and support from the central government. To remedy this, the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) engaged with the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA) to revamp the CMA in Grand Cape Mount County. The CMA was reconstituted following the recommendations of the EJF's "Taking stock: documenting the effectiveness of co-management practice in Liberia"<sup>1</sup> report. The report recommends a cluster approach to reduce the geographical coverage and the number of communities forming the CMA to ensure inclusion and effectiveness.

<sup>1</sup> EJF (2023) *Taking stock: documenting the effectiveness of co-management practice in Liberia*, <https://ejfoundation.org/search/results?searchbar=liberia#copied>.

In September 2023, EJF and NaFAA established three new CMAs for Regions I, II, and III and inducted six new officials (president, vice president, secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, and auditor) in all regions.



Region II CMA induction, Bomie, Grand Cape Mount County

Links to news articles on CMA establishment:

- <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-eu-funded-fisheries-project-inducts-cma-in-grand-cape-mount-county-fishing-communities/>
- <https://fcwc-fish.org/other-news/eu-funded-fisheries-project-completes-cma-establishment>
- <https://www.icsf.net/newss/eu-funded-fisheries-project-inducts-cma-in-grand-cape-mount-county-fishing-communities-in-liberia/>
- <https://www.liberianobserver.com/liberia-eu-supports-fisheries-co-management-associations-establishment-grand-cape-mount>



NaFAA Deputy Director General for Administration cutting ribbon for the CMA building, Buchanan, Grand Bassa

Additionally, towards the end of 2023, EJF opened a new CMA office in Grand Bassa County on 12 December 2024. The office, which was dedicated by the NaFAA Deputy Director-General for Administration, Mr Augustine Manoballah, comprises two offices, one bathroom, and a conference hall. It was furnished with computers, chairs, office equipment, and a 5-kilowatt solar panel to provide electricity 24 hours a day.

Links to CMA building handing over:

- <https://fcwc-fish.org/other-news/liberia-nafaa-ddga-dedicates-european-union-funded-cma-office-in-buchanan>

## Community science data collection and monitoring

Community science is a participatory approach that helps community members collect, understand, analyse, share information, and take action on issues impacting their community. It was introduced in the project to enhance community participation in fisheries management and to support NaFAA with data collection. The established Collaborative Management Associations organised Community Science teams as one of their core committees, responsible for contributing to fisheries data collection in Liberia, improving beaches' sanitary conditions and ocean health, and fostering volunteerism in the communities.

In this reporting period, community science monitoring provided essential data on the water temperature, catch sizes, tide levels, and other useful information for decision-making. In the first quarter of this year, 16 community science volunteers were trained in data collection and reporting. To support these volunteers, EJF distributed protective gear and other materials, including 15 raincoats, rain boots, gloves, and wheelbarrows, for the community science team through the Collaborative Management Association. Four counties - Grand Bassa, Margibi Grand Cape Mount, and Grand Kru counties - received branded community science material through the CMAs under the Communities for Fisheries project.



Presentation of community science material to CMA, Buchanan, Grand Bassa County



Community science beach cleaning activity, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County

## Two research reports on gender inclusiveness and stakeholders' analysis

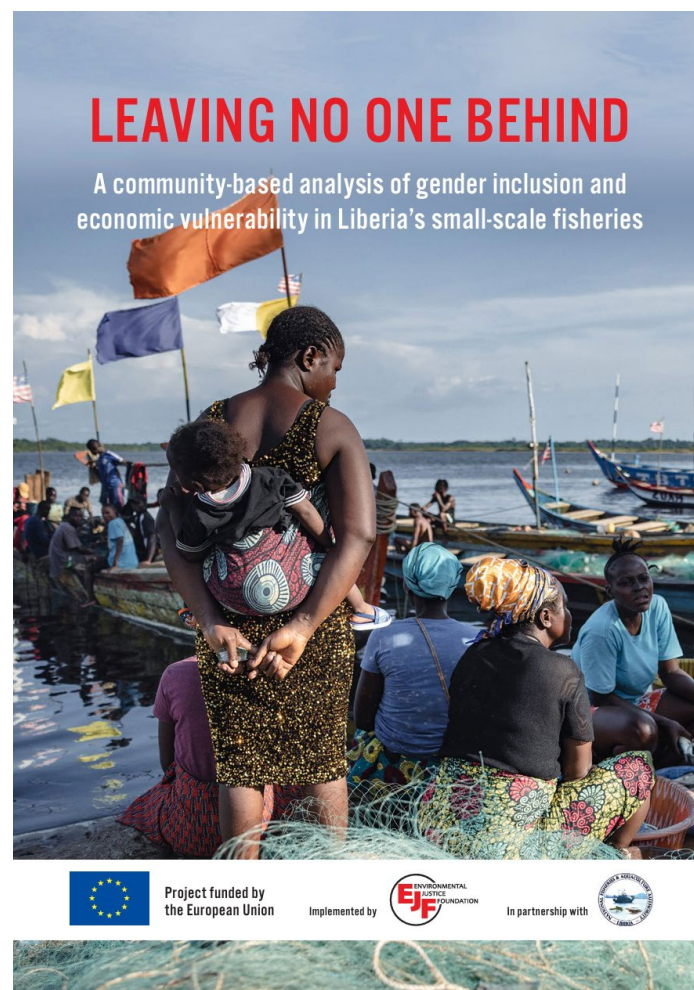
From July to December 2023, the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) published two reports titled “Who decides? Stakeholder and network analysis of customary governance in small-scale fisheries of Liberia” and “Leaving no one behind: A community-based analysis of gender inclusion and economic vulnerability in Liberia’s small-scale fisheries”.

The stakeholder and network analysis report focuses on the small-scale fisheries sector's reliance on informal governance structures with multiple stakeholders at different leadership levels. This report analyses how these structures play an important role in addressing issues like overexploitation and unsustainable fishing practices.

The second report, looking at gender inclusion and economic vulnerability in Liberia’s small-scale fisheries sector, documents gender issues and reveals that strategies to advance women's status in small-scale fisheries are still a key development issue. It also shows that marginalised and economically vulnerable groups in Liberia's fishing communities are being excluded from crucial decision-making processes. The reports were published online and shared in hardcopies with stakeholders, including the EU and NaFAA.

Links to the reports:

- <https://ejfoundation.org/reports/leaving-no-one-behind-a-community-based-analysis-of-gender-inclusion-and-economic-vulnerability-in-liberias-small-scale-fisheries>
- <https://ejfoundation.org/reports/who-decides-stakeholder-and-network-analysis-of-customary-governance-in-small-scale-fisheries-of-liberia>



## DASE app monitoring

During this period, the DASE app was installed on three additional fishermen's phones, bringing the total number of fishermen using the app to monitor illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing to 64. They were trained to report IUU fishing activities in Grand Bassa, Margibi, Grand Kru, and Grand Cape County. The app uses the Kobo collect platform form for data collection. It sends information on suspected IUU fishing to the Liberian authorities by passing on the GPS coordinates, pictures of the vessels, and other information from photos taken by fishers.

Additionally, EJF Community Mobilisers continuously raised awareness in the communities of the importance of the DASE app and how it is used by fishers to report IUU fishing.



Dase app installation

## Village Savings Loan Associations expand, empowering more women

The Communities for Fisheries project Village Saving Loan Association (VSLA) scheme expanded during this reporting period by establishing six new associations in Grand Cape Mount County and Grand Bassa County. One hundred eighty-six women, mainly fishmongers and processors, were trained in financial management, record keeping, loan disbursement, conducting basic VSLA meetings, and sharing dividends. The new VSLAs incorporated women from Tailor Kru Town, Bomie, & Falie in Grand Cape Mount County and Little Bassa, Dohr, & Barconnie in Grand Bassa County.

In the second quarter of 2023, the VLSAs raised over US\$95,000 from savings and loans given to members. This does not include the over US\$100,000 raised during the first period of the year, from January to June 2023.



VSLA meeting, Buchanan, Grand Bassa County



## CMAs training and LAFA's empowerment

Training and empowering CMAs is the first step towards making them more effective and self-sufficient in managing small-scale fisheries across the country. In the last two quarters, EJF conducted leadership and communication training for the three CMAs in Grand Cape Mount County. Over five days, the 18 newly elected CMA officials from Regions I, II, and III benefited from the training.

In addition, EJF supported the Liberia Artisanal Fishers Association (LAFA) in reviewing and adopting its 2022 revised constitution, setting up interim leadership, and conducting leadership training. The project also hosted a consultative meeting with LAFA executives on the status of their ongoing advocacy to reduce licence fees on motorised boats and canoes and the development of LAFA's annual work plan.



Film screening during engagement with LAFA, Monrovia, Montserrado County

## EJF supported the celebration of 50 years of European Union partnership with Liberia

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the European Union's partnership with Liberia, EJF and the European Union organised an outdoor event, which included a boat race for fishermen on Lake Piso in Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County. The event brought together over 300 participants, including youths, community members, sea chiefs, fishmongers, and other stakeholders, along with the European Union delegation, including the EU Ambassador, Nona Deprez, and the Head of Cooperation, Mr Jeroen Witkamp. Over 80 fishermen from over 16 fishing communities competed in the boat race.

In a speech at the event, the Ambassador stated, "As we celebrate the progress brought about by our 50 years of partnership, we must also acknowledge that more work needs to be done." She also emphasised the European Union's unwavering support for Liberia's development, promoting good governance and safeguarding human rights and democracy.



The EU Ambassador delivering speech at the EU-Liberia 50 year partnership event, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County

Link to media article:

- <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/fishery/liberia-dozens-of-fishermen-partakes-in-canoe-race-in-commemoration-of-eu-liberia-50-years-of-partnership/>



Fishers competing in the boat race, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County



EJF staff creating awareness on CMA in Sowie, Grand Cape Mount County

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