

COMMUNITIES FOR FISHERIES

ISSUE BRIEF

Project update: December 2019 – December 2020

Introduction

The 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 community CMAs, creating adequate capacity for community monitoring and reporting of illegal fishing.

This brief summarises the project's activities in Year One, from 13 December 2019 to 12 December 2020.

Work in Year One of the project focused mainly on setting up foundational structures to implement the project activities in subsequent years. This included: (i) building relationships with key partners, target groups, and stakeholders; (ii) raising awareness of the project through radio, film, events, social media, press releases, and blogs; and (iii) generating some baseline data for monitoring the project impact.



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Implemented by



In partnership with



- **Film trip and production of project film, “The Strongest Pillar”.**

One film trip was organised from 21 January to 30 January 2020, to collect factual evidence highlighting the need to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing while building community co-management and highlighting the important role played by women in Liberia’s small-scale fisheries. It also aimed to increase support from the project’s target audience for its overall activities. Filming took place in Robertsport in Grand Cape Mount County and Monrovia in Montserrado. The film team interviewed members of the Robertsport CMA, the Senior Management Team of the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA) and documented coastal communities. A launch film, providing an overview of the project, was produced and shared with key stakeholders earlier in the year, and positive feedback on the film was received.



EJF Film Team filming small-scale fishing activity in Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County

Film link:

<https://ejfoundation.org/films/the-strongest-pillar-why-women-are-crucial-for-the-sustainable-future-of-liberias-fisheries>

• Jingles

During May-July, the Communities for Fisheries produced radio jingles on public health for COVID-19 (Phase I), targeting fishing communities in seven counties (Grand Kru, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Sinoe and Maryland). The radio jingles were aired three times daily (May 11 to July 15) by the community and national radio stations in six dialects and pidgin English. In July (Phase II), the project provided essential equipment (handwashing buckets, soap and masks) and posters and a town crier to spread awareness on the importance of handwashing and social distancing to avoid COVID-19 in Robertsport, Westpoint Monrovia, Grand Cess and Harper.

• Setting up the project office and recruitment of key staff for the project.

A Programme Manager, a Programme Officer, a Communications Officer, two Technical Officers (one focused on fisheries and the other on gender and community participation), and two Community Mobilisers to facilitate community-level engagements were recruited during this period. A Programme Officer was recruited in May to provide technical support across all programmatic work. In June 2020, a Fisheries Technical Director was appointed to lead the EU project in-country and was replaced by Cephass Asare as Country Programme Manager in November 2020. An experienced Communications Officer was recruited in early August, a Technical Officer for fisheries, a Community Mobiliser for Robertsport in November, a second Technical Officer (gender and participatory-focused) and a Community Mobiliser for Marshall in December 2020. The project also recruited a Driver/Logistician in February 2021. Recruitment also started for the other Community Mobiliser roles and a Finance/Admin Officer.

The EJF Liberia team also moved to a more suitable space and location, in Oldest Congo Town, Johnson Compound. An office was also secured for the Community Mobiliser in Robertsport within the CMA building.

• Community engagement

Community engagement activities targeted stakeholders' identification and involvement in initiating and implementing the Communities for Fisheries project in four counties in Liberia – Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Grand Bassa, and Grand Kru. These activities were an important part of establishing a cordial working relationship with the communities, a prerequisite to ensuring the successful implementation of the project. The community engagements were done in different parts: meetings with county and city authorities, the Fanti and Kru fishing communities, the CMA (in Robertsport), and the fishmongers and fish processors. The main method of engagement with stakeholders was focus group discussions. The engagements in all four counties lasted from 17 August to 23 September 2020, and 512 persons were reached: 87 in Robertsport, 116 in Buchanan, 92 in Marshall, and 217 in Grand Kru.



Community engagement in Sass Town, Grand Kru County

- **Setting up and meeting with the project Steering Committee to support project implementation and ensure synergies with similar projects operating in Liberia, particularly in these project counties.**

The Steering Committee (SC) comprises a range of key stakeholders to ensure engagement and participation in the project, offer scheduled updates on project progress, and discuss opportunities for collaboration - the first meeting of the project SC was held on 21 October 2020. The primary focus of the inaugural meeting was to introduce the project to the proposed members of the SC and review the draft SC Terms of Reference (ToR) and reporting format. To efficiently facilitate engagement, input and reporting, the ToR proposed a core and wider membership and invited everyone to the inaugural meeting. The proposed core membership comprised of NaFAA, representatives of elected CMAs for each project site, the Liberia Artisanal Fishermen Association (LAFA), the European Union Delegation in Liberia (EU), the National Authorising Officer (NAO), and EJF, with EJF and NaFAA serving as co-chairs. The wider membership proposed includes representatives from the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The core group is to meet quarterly, and the wider group is to attend annually, the latter to ensure all stakeholders are updated on project progress and to help identify synergies with related efforts. 18 persons attended the inaugural meeting (plus five EJF staff, three in-person and two remote), with representatives from NaFAA, LAFA, the EU, the CMA Robertsport, and the other partners.

• IUU fishing monitoring app training

The training was conducted for fishers in Robertsport on how to use the IUU fishing monitoring app, Dase, to capture and report IUU fishing cases at sea. 10 fishers from Fanti Town and Kru Town were trained and equipped with five smartphones and waterproof pouches to trial the app. The Dase app has been adapted for Liberian fishermen. An initial report has been received from one of the smartphones of a trawler fishing just off the Inshore Exclusion Zone (IEZ). Although the trawler was not fishing in the IEZ, the report indicates the usefulness of the app in enabling fishers to monitor local IUU fishing.



Training fishers to use the Dase app for IUU monitoring and reporting, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County

• Project launch

The project launch took place on 11 December 2020 at the Monrovia City Hall, combining in-person and remote participation. In attendance was the Director General of NaFAA, the Executive Director of EPA, the Deputy Director of Technical Services of NaFAA, the Head of the EU Delegation to Liberia, NGOs, members of LAFA, a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Embassy of Sweden, the City Mayor for Grand Kru and journalists from the Daily Observer, Truth FM, Liberian National TV, and Liberia Broadcasting System. EJF CEO and Founder, Steve Trent delivered the welcome address, and a special statement was delivered by the EU Ambassador to Liberia, Laurent Delahousse. The project was officially launched by Hon. Emma Glassco, the Director General of NAFAA, who also delivered the keynote address. The organisation of the launch took into consideration social distancing and complied with national COVID-19 requirements.



Participants at the Communities for Fisheries project launch, Monrovia, Montserrado County

Key messages from the launch were:

- EJJ and Conservation International should harmonise and use their resources optimally to yield good results that will benefit the fisherfolks of Liberia;
- Liberia's Coast Guard, operating under the Liberia Maritime Authority, should be a key partner to ensure the enforcement of laws against IUU fishing;
- The project should ensure that local fishermen use sustainable and safe fishing methods by raising awareness of the effects of dynamite and other unsustainable fishing methods on the natural environment and human health;
- EJJ should work with LAFA and CMAs. LAFA is the body that advocates for the sustainable use of fish resources by small-scale fishers in Liberia;
- EJJ should create a network of CMAs around the country – this includes working with the existing CMA in Montserrado and Bomi, even though these counties are not part of the project's targeted counties;
- EJJ should work closely with NaFAA to ensure the project is sustained after it ends;
- EJJ should empower local fishermen;
- The project should support local fishermen in using the Dase app by providing smartphones and assistance.

Links to project launch news coverage

- EJP Launches Communities for Fisheries Project in Liberia:
<https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/ejp-launches-communities-for-fisheries-project-in-liberia/>
- Liberia: EJP Launches Communities for Fisheries Project in Liberia:
<https://allafrica.com/stories/202012140472.html>
- “Liberia Remains Committed To Sustainable Fisheries Management”
- NaFAA DG Says At Launch Of EJP EU \$3Million Fisheries Project:
<https://mnewsafrika.com/liberia-remains-committed-to-sustainable-fisheries-management-nafaa-dg-says-at-launch-of-ejp-eu-3million-fisheries-project/>
- New project backs Liberia’s war against IUU:
<https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/new-project-backs-liberia-s-war-against-iuu>



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