

COMMUNITIES FOR FISHERIES

ISSUE BRIEF

Project update: July to December 2021

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 provides an update on the project's activities implemented during the second half of Year Two, July to December 2021.



Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) meeting, Margibi County.



Project funded by
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Implemented by



In partnership with



Financial literacy and Village Savings and Loan Association

The Communities for Fisheries project introduced Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to the communities to train women in financial management and enable them to improve their lives and communities through enhanced control of their finances. This activity aimed to improve women's access to loans and teach them accountability by encouraging them to repay the loans they collect from their VSLAs.

From August to November 2021, with support from the project, the communities established 13 VSLA groups and trained 373 fishmongers in VSLA concepts and principles in four counties (Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Grand Bassa, and Grand Kru counties). Two groups were established in Robertsport with 61 members, four in Marshall with 126 members, two in Buchanan with 66 members, and five in Grand Kru with 118 members. The fishmongers pay shares, 200 per share, and social funds, an amount which varies in the different communities. Additionally, the project provided the groups with metal cash boxes, locks, calculators, pens, rulers, passbooks, and ledgers to kick-start their savings clubs.

Within this period, the Robertsport *Dependable Women* raised \$2,782, Uptown *Women of Substance* raised \$ 3,328, Buchanan *Fish for Living* raised \$3,846, and Fanti Town *Trust Yourself* raised \$2,735. In addition, Marshall *Women of Vision 1* raised \$2,234, *Women of Vision 2* raised \$3,205, and *Successful Women* raised \$3,381.

Links: <https://www.liberianobserver.com/liberia-ejf-village-savings-loan-impacts-women-fishmongers>



Financial and literacy training for VSLA group, Grand Kru County

Publicity

• Radio programmes

The Communities for Fisheries project engaged in publicity activities to increase its visibility in targeted communities and the country at large. The publicity has raised awareness of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, using the Dase App, women's role in fisheries, sustainable fishing practices, and CMAs to manage Liberia's small-scale fisheries sector.

On 22 September 2021, a live phone-in radio programme was held on Liberia's national radio station, ELBC, which is listened to by more than 3 million people and followed by approximately 1.5 million people on Facebook. Two radio programmes were also held on OK FM and ECOWAS Radio. These programmes were attended by the programme's project manager, communications officer, and gender officer. Critical topics discussed on the programmes included the project's work in the communities, the importance of women's role in the fisheries sector, and the adverse impacts of IUU fishing.

• Creation of billboards

The project also planted billboards made up of promotional messages on CMAs, IUU fishing, the empowerment of women, and sustainable fishing. Communities for Fisheries project billboards measuring 8x12ft were installed in five counties, with two in each of Margibi, Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, and Grand Kru counties. Some of the messages on the billboards include: "Empower women to support co-management" and "Stop illegal fishing".



Billboard with co-management message mounted, Buchanan, Grand Bassa County

- **Mass dissemination of EJF’s “The Strongest Pillar” documentary on three TV stations in Liberia**

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) released a documentary titled “The Strongest Pillar” in 2021. The documentary highlights the critical role of women in the fisheries sector and the negative impacts of IUU fishing on fisherfolks and the general population. It was shown on ELBC TV, Power TV, and Sky TV; all stations have broad coverage in the country.

Links: <https://youtu.be/maFcoBHL-XI?si=gQvgveJHNhw0Yib5>

Training and capacity-building activities

Press trip

From 16 December to 22 December 2021, the project took six journalists from six major national media institutions to three of the project’s counties (Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, and Grand Bassa counties) to give them insights into the project’s activities and impacts on the communities. The press trip aimed to give journalists a chance to gain first-hand experience of the project’s achievements with a focus on the VSLA scheme, the solar system in Robertsport, and the construction of the CMA building in Marshall, Margibi County.

Press workshop

On 28 September 2021, a one-day journalists’ workshop was held at the Golden Key Hotel in Paynesville, Liberia. The workshop targeted 10 journalists from 10 major national and community-based media institutions to create a network of reporters to ensure that fisheries issues are reported regularly and accurately. At the end of the training, the journalists formed a chat group to share information and investigate fisheries-related topics. They also became acquainted with details of the CFF project and knowledge of Liberia’s fisheries sector, EJF’s support to the sector, and EJF’s collaboration with NaFAA.

Links: <https://liberianewsagency.com/2021/10/06/ejf-strengthens-fishery-reportage-holds-intensive-training-for-journalists/>



Journalist workshop, Monrovia

Leadership and communications training

The project conducted capacity-building training for 110 women in four communities in Grand Kru County and two communities in Buchanan on 26-28 August and 13 November 2021. The training had two modules: *Leadership* and *Tools and Techniques for Effective Communications*. The training aimed to build and enhance the leadership capacity of women in the communities, encouraging them to actively participate in decision-making processes and assume more leadership roles.

Dase app launch

On 28 October 2021, the project officially launched the Dase IUU fishing reporting and monitoring app in Monrovia at the Monrovia City Hall.

The Dase App, which means ‘evidence’ in the Fanti dialect, provides a simple, user-friendly program that helps fishers collect evidence and information on IUU fishing while at sea.

To use the app, the user opens it, snaps a photo of the boat with its name or identification number displayed, and enters the location when a ship is seen engaging in illegal fishing. Then, the software takes care of the rest and submits the report to a central database where the authorities can utilise the evidence to apprehend and punish the offenders.

At the event, NaFAA, through its Executive Director, Madame Emma M. Glassco, approved the use of the Dase app in Liberia and encouraged fishermen to install it on their phones to assist the government in combating IUU fishing. The program was attended by 87 persons, including representatives from fishing communities, donors, and government officials.

Link to the news article on Dase launch:

<https://www.liberianobserver.com/artisanal-fishers-interest-wont-be-compromised>



Director-General of NaFAA delivering keynote address at the app launch, Monrovia

Lafa training

The project hosted communications training for the Liberia Artisanal Fishermen Association (Lafa) to empower them and make them more efficient and productive as an organisation representing thousands of artisanal fishers. The training was necessitated by a capacity needs assessment of Lafa conducted by the project, which revealed that Lafa lacks communication capacity. The training was hosted for two days and had 10 participants from Lafa. After the training, the project supported Lafa's communications team to operate their social media pages for three months.

Gender training for journalists and Lafa staff in October and December 2021

The training was held to strengthen collaboration and coordination among journalists and improve their skills in reporting gender-related issues in Liberia's fisheries sector. It also exposed participants to basic gender concepts, analytical tools, and approaches to gender mainstreaming in balanced reporting. Ten journalists from ten media institutions in Monrovia, Margibi, Cape Mount, and Grand Bassa counties participated in the training.

Robertsport CMA election awareness

Following discussions with Grand Cape Mount County CMA leadership and NaFAA, the Communities for Fisheries project supported the CMA in conducting a thorough election awareness campaign in the 16 Grand Cape Mount County fishing communities. The awareness exercises were carried out in two phases: the first in eight fishing communities in August, and the second in the remaining eight fishing communities in September. The main purposes of the exercise were to inform the fishing communities and electorates of the positions to be contested for, candidates' eligibility, registration procedures, and election dates. The awareness also aimed to reignite the communities' engagement and participation in the CMA process.

However, the elections were not held on the set dates because of a mandate from NaFAA to halt the activities due to administrative reasons.

EJF and NaFAA field enumerators' training

EJF, through the Communities for Fisheries project, provided a five-day training workshop for 12 NaFAA field enumerators. The workshop was held from 27 September to 1 October 2021, at NaFAA's technical office on Bushrod Island and was facilitated by NaFAA's staff. Some topics covered were species identification, mobile data collection applications, NaFAA data collection schemes, and sampling methods. This action was taken to support NaFAA in collecting data needed to inform sound management and decision-making processes.



Participants at the enumerator training



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