

## LIBERIA FISHERIES GOVERNANCE PROJECT

# NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 01

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This publication marks the project's first newsletter issue, which seeks to reflect on and publicize the significant strides made by the project so far. Welcome to the January–December 2024 newsletter. This issue covers updates on activities and engagements carried out under the Liberia Fisheries Governance Project (LFGP) relating to its first year of implementation.

### PROJECT INCEPTION MEETINGS



As part of first-line activities, the project team carried out several inception meetings to introduce the project and its expected outcomes to key stakeholders. Additionally, the sessions were to help identify areas for synergy and elicit key institutional insights within the landscape. These engagements were with different categories of stakeholders: government/regulatory agencies (including local authorities), fisheries interventions and civil society organizations (CSO), and fisherfolk.

At the level of the government and regulatory agencies, the project team had separate meetings with the Sinoe County Authority and the National

Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA) — both the national and county offices. For the other fisheries interventions in Liberia, the project held respective meetings with Conservation International (implementing the Blue Ocean Program), the World Bank (implementing the Liberia Sustainable Fisheries Management Project), and the FAO, who are providing processing units across fishing communities in Liberia.



At the grassroots level, the project embarked on community entry across the four coastal districts of Sinoe County. In addition to creating awareness about the intervention, the engagements with



fishery value chain actors sought to secure their buy-in for the project rollout. Furthermore, the project engaged the Liberian Artisanal Fishermen Association (LAFA), which is an advocacy body for the rights and well-being of fisherfolk.

## BASELINE STUDY

March to July saw the project team conduct a baseline study on the current status of fisheries governance within the coastal landscape of Sinoe County. The goal of the baseline study was to contextualize the existing systems and processes employed in fisheries governance within Sinoe County. The specific objectives of the study looked to

- analyze the local fisheries leadership and governance system within the target landscape
- assess the structures available for fisherfolk participation within fisheries governance
- investigate the contributions of local CSOs and media entities to fisheries governance



With the conduct of the baseline study, the project developed and pre-tested data-collection tools and recruited and trained 10 enumerators for the exercise. The enumerators were oriented on the questions, the survey methodology, and ethical considerations for the study. Subsequently, the project team, together with the enumerators and personnel from NaFAA (county level), embarked on the data collection.



The study saw 387 fisherfolk across 13 communities interviewed and five focus group discussions (FGD) held. Seven local CSOs and three media agencies were engaged, as well as five key informant interviews (KII) were conducted for the study.

Following data collection, the data was subjected to statistical analysis and the findings were documented in a report. The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences of the University of Liberia (UL-DoFAS) was then engaged by the project to subject the baseline report to academic rigour. The baseline report can be assessed in this [link](#).

## MAPPING EXERCISE

The project team, in April, carried out a mapping exercise of all local CSOs and media entities within Sinoe County.

The exercise had the rationale to identify and interrogate the areas of interest of the above-mentioned institutions.



The project developed a discussion guide which informed the interactions with the institutions. The information sought for using the discussion guide included governance and operational structure, awareness and participation in fisheries, self-assessment of existing capacities, capacity needs, and challenges. In identifying these institutions, an exhaustive assessment of their potentials and limitations will follow.

## PROJECT LAUNCH

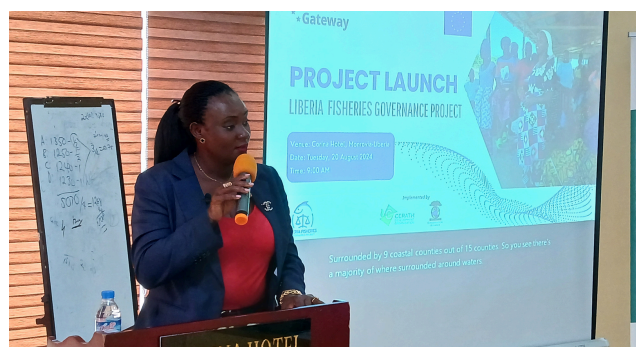


In August, the project held its launch to officially announce its commencement. Towards the launch event, the team developed several information, entertainment and communication (IEC) materials and sent out invitations to the various categories of key fisheries stakeholders.

Present at the launch were the director general and reps from NaFAA and the European Union ambassador. Also present were reps from other CSOs and fisheries interventions, existing collaborative management associations (CMA), and the project's beneficiary



groups. Several media houses were present to offer coverage, including a live transmission, of the event.



The event, which was held in Monrovia, saw the CERATH country director present on the project, its goal and objectives, activities, and expected results. Further, the project manager also presented on preliminary findings of the baseline study. The occasion was crowned by the keynote speech and official declaration of LFGP's launch by the director general of NaFAA.

You can access the report on our [website](#) and watch the Facebook Live broadcast by [ELBC](#) and [SpoonTV](#) media.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

From September to October, the project, through a consultant, conducted a comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the mapped institutions. The exercise's objective was to assess the potentials and limitations of each organization.





The consent of all the institutions was sought before the onset of the exercise. The exercise sought information on five different organizational capacity categories: governance, management, human resource, financial management, and sustainability. The finding, here, will be utilized in developing tailor-made capacity sessions for the organizations.

### COMMUNITY PROFILING ON ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS OF INTEREST



In October, the project embarked on a rapid assessment across the project communities, targeted at profiling alternative livelihoods of interest within the project landscape. The team developed data collection tools that sought to determine the prevalence of livelihoods outside fisheries, alternative livelihoods with localized demand, and alternative livelihoods of personal interest. After the assessment, alternative livelihoods identified included tie-and-dye making, baking and bread making, cassava processing, and soap making.

### SEARCH FOR CRAFTSMEN

After the rapid assessment and its findings, the team commenced efforts at identifying master craftsmen for the respective livelihood options identified. The master craftsmen are being recruited to provide skills transfer relating to the identified alternative

livelihoods of interest. The project has obtained contacts of these craftsmen and initiated talks aimed at contracting. The contracting arrangements are yet to be finalized.

### COLLABORATION WITH NAFAA AND CAPACITY SESSION ON THE CMA MODEL



Within the period under review, the project initiated and secured the collaboration of NaFAA towards their commitment and efforts at facilitating the formation of a CMA in Sinoe County, among other support services.



In line with the collaboration, NaFAA, in November, engaged the local CSOs in a three-day training of trainers (ToT) session. The session, which focused on the facilitation, formation, and sustainability of CMAs, touched on topics such as CMA guiding principles, mechanisms for representation, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.



## SELECTION OF BOS AND MOU SIGNING CEREMONY

Following the findings and recommendations of the SWOT analysis, alongside other considerations, the project settled on five CSOs and two media. These CSOs and media entities will constitute the project's beneficiary organizations (BO) who will receive enhanced capacities and subgrants towards execution of the project's objectives. The project, in December, held a ceremony where memorandums of understanding (MoU) with the seven BOs were signed to concretize the collaboration.



The project has established partnership with the following institutions as its BOs:

- Young Intellectuals for Liberia's Progress
- Progressive Movement for Transformation and Empowerment
- Community Initiative against Gender Discrimination
- National Union Organization of the Disabled
- Sinoe County Women's Platform
- Voice of Sinoe
- Liberty Radio



## LEARNING VISITS TO EXISTING CMAS



As a build-on to the CMA ToT session, the project, together with NaFAA, organized four learning visits for the local CSOs. The visits, which made stops at four CMAs (in four different counties), were to provide firsthand insights on best practices and lessons learnt concerning CMA formation and sustainability. It is expected that the insights gleaned will guide the local CSOs in their efforts to facilitate CMA formation in Sinoe County. The existing CMAs visited were the Buchanan, Marshall, Robertsport, and Montserrado-Bomi CMAs

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING SESSIONS



In December, the project reengaged the consultant (for the SWOT analysis) towards the conduct of organizational strengthening sessions for the BOs. The decision to reengage the consultant was to leverage his firsthand understanding of the SWOT analysis findings. The consultant went on to develop



and deliver tailor-made capacity sessions and hands-on coaching to each BO. The organizational strengthening was in the following areas:

- Organizational efficiency and governance structures
- Financial management and sustainability
- Strategic planning and leveraging opportunities
- Risk management and response to threats



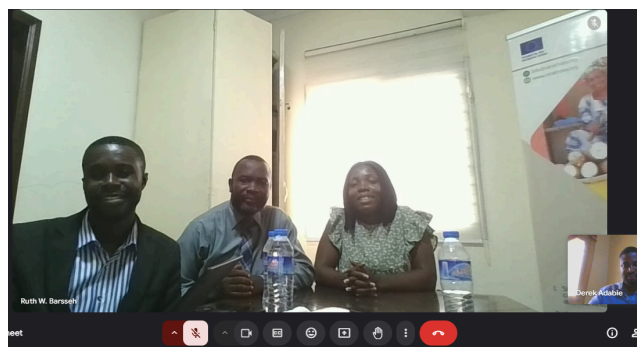
## COLLABORATION WITH THE PRESS UNION OF LIBERIA

Within the reporting window, the project reached out to the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) towards a collaboration aimed at providing the media institutions that constitute the BOs needed capacity support. Having held a meeting to discuss the

details of the partnership, both parties have agreed to the collaboration, in principle, and will sign an MoU towards this end.



PUL is expected to provide capacity training and technical backstopping to the media entities in areas such as content gathering and reporting, persuasive storytelling, and media advocacy.












## ABOUT THE LIBERIA FISHERIES GOVERNANCE PROJECT

The Liberia Fisheries Governance Project (LFGP), funded by the European Union (EU), aims to improve good governance, democracy, and accountability in the coastal landscape of Sinoe County. The project's goal will be executed through the enhanced capacities and performance of local CSOs and media (as actors in safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of fisherfolk).

The project's specific objectives touch on

-  organizational strengthening of the CSOs and media,
-  promotion of the Co-Management Association (CMA) approach,
-  enhancing women, youth and marginalized persons' participation in the coastal economy
-  advocacy on sustainable governance and fisherfolk rights.

The outcomes of the project include

-  Improved fisheries governance and democratic processes that take into account women, youth, and marginalized groups
-  Enhanced protection of fisherfolk's rights regarding the use and management of coastal resources
-  Creation and sustenance of economic opportunities resulting in the overall well-being of fisherfolk

The project's target group are local CSOs, media entities, and the fisherfolk of Sinoe County. The project, which commenced in January 2024, will run for 36 months and conclude in December 2026.



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+231 555 312 452 || +231 555 959 831

[www.cerathdev.org](http://www.cerathdev.org) || [info@cerathdev.org](mailto:info@cerathdev.org)

  @CerathDevelopmentOrganization