



LIBERIA FISHERIES GOVERNANCE PROJECT

FACILITATOR'S MANUAL FOR CMA AWARENESS & MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES

Supporting the Establishment
of a CMA in Sinoe County

JULY 2025



**Supporting the Establishment of a Collaborative Management
Association (CMA) in Sinoe County, Liberia**

Facilitator's Manual for CMA Awareness and Mobilization Activities

This manual is adapted from a set of presentation slides developed by the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA). The content of these slides was presented by NaFAA during a training-of-trainers session facilitated by LFGP in November 2024.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 About LFGP

The Liberia Fisheries Government Project (LFGP) is a 3-year European Union (EU)-funded intervention that aims to improve good governance, democracy, and accountability in the coastal landscape of Sinoe County. The project's goal is designed to be achieved through enhanced capacities and performance of local civil society organizations (CSOs) and media actors to safeguard the rights and livelihoods of fishermen in the target areas.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- Organizational strengthening of CSOs and media institutions as entities for good governance,
- Promotion of the Co-Management Association (CMA) approach,
- Enhancing women, youth, and marginalized persons' participation in the coastal economy, and
- Advocacy on sustainable governance and fisherfolk rights

The project beneficiaries are the local CSOs, media actors, and fisherfolk within Sinoe County's four coastal districts: Greenville, Butaw, Dugbe, and Sanquin. The project runs from January 2024–December 2026.

The project's anticipated outcomes include (i) improved fisheries governance and democratic processes, (ii) enhanced protection of fisherfolk rights, and (iii) creation and sustenance of economic opportunities.

I.2 Purpose of the Manual

This manual is designed to guide beneficiary organizations (BOs), particularly the local CSOs (selected by the LFGP), in the implementation of awareness creation and community mobilization activities for the establishment of a CMA in Sinoe County.

It provides a step-by-step reference for field facilitators to

- Engage communities on the CMA concept.
 - Promote inclusive dialogue on local fisheries management.
 - Mobilize communities to actively participate in the formation and operation of a CMA.
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I.3 How to Use This Manual

This manual is practical and action-oriented. Facilitators are encouraged to

- Read each section, together with the presentation slides¹ shared as part of the CMA training of trainers, before engaging communities.
 - Adapt messages to local languages and cultures.
 - Continuously document feedback and learning for reporting.
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¹ Can be accessed [here](#)

2. UNDERSTANDING THE CMA CONCEPT

2.1 Background of the CMA Initiative

Liberia's small-scale fisheries sector supports over 75,000 full-time fishers, yet limited government manpower (only seven inspectors for nine coastal counties) means that resource governance remains weak. Recognizing this gap, the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA), backed by national and international legal frameworks, adopted the Collaborative Management Association (CMA) model to complement its efforts in fisheries governance.

There are currently eight CMAs across six (out of nine) coastal counties in Liberia. Counties without CMAs are Sinoe, Maryland, and River Cess. In Sinoe County, the CMA process is being rolled out under LFGP, with local CSOs leading awareness and mobilization efforts.

2.2 What is a CMA?

A **Collaborative Management Association (CMA)** is a community-based structure formed to share responsibility with the government in managing local fisheries resources, improving sustainability, ownership, and livelihood outcomes. In Liberia, CMAs are recognized by law as legitimate bodies that work with NaFAA to oversee fishing activities in designated coastal areas.

In simple terms: A CMA is a partnership between the fishing community and the government (and other key stakeholders) to make decisions together, enforce rules, and protect the future of fisheries.

2.3 Why CMAs Are Needed

Liberia's fishery sector faces several challenges:

- Weak enforcement due to few government inspectors.
- Overfishing and unsustainable practices.
- Limited community participation in management.
- Loss of traditional fishing knowledge.

CMAs address these issues by:

- Empowering local communities to manage their own resources.
 - Strengthening accountability and compliance.
 - Promoting sustainable fishing practices.
 - Ensuring benefits reach both present and future generations.
-

2.4 Legal Foundation of the CMA

The establishment and operation of CMAs are grounded in both national laws and international agreements:

National Legal Instruments:

- I. Fisheries and Aquaculture Act (2017)

2. Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulations (2020)
3. Fisheries Management and Development Law (2019)
4. Liberia Local Government Act (2018)
5. Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Strategy (2021)

Some Relevant International Frameworks:

- FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
 - Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines)
 - United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea
 - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
-

2.5 Principles That Guide CMA Implementation

General Principles

1. **Accountability** – CMAs must answer to all stakeholders.
 2. **Equity and Gender** – Inclusion of women, youth, and the elderly.
 3. **Participation** – All stakeholders must be involved.
 4. **Transparency** – Open communication and decision-making.
 5. **Sustainability** – Long-term resource conservation.
-

2.6 What Does a CMA Do?

A CMA typically performs the following tasks:

- Develops local fisheries management plans.
 - Conducts monitoring and surveillance with fishers.
 - Enforces rules and resolves local conflicts.
 - Promotes gender inclusion and educates communities.
 - Collects landing fees, membership dues, and applies local fines.
 - Liaises with NaFAA and other stakeholders for holistic fisheries management.
-

Key Takeaway for Facilitators:

When engaging communities, emphasize that “**CMA = shared power and responsibility**”. It gives the community a legal voice and helps protect their livelihood and identity.

3. KEY CMA MESSAGES TO COMMUNICATE

Overview

Clear and consistent messaging is essential throughout the CMA awareness and mobilization process. As a facilitator, your responsibility is to help communities understand, believe in, and own the idea of co-management.

This section outlines the core messages that should be emphasized at every stage of engagement. These messages should be tailored to local context, translated into local languages, and reinforced using stories, visuals, or analogies where possible.

3.1 CMA Is for the Community

“The CMA gives you the power to manage your own fisheries resources, legally and fairly.”

Key Points:

- CMA allows fishers and processors to make local rules that NaFAA recognizes.
 - Decisions on gear types, fishing seasons, fees, and penalties will involve community input.
 - It is a way for fishers to protect their livelihoods.
-

3.2 CMA Brings Ownership and Legitimacy

“With a CMA, your voice is no longer informal—it becomes official.”

Key Points:

- CMA decisions are backed by the Fisheries Act of 2017 and other legal instruments.
 - CMAs can receive financial support, training, and technical help from NaFAA and partners.
 - They will be registered and recognized nationally.
-

3.3 CMA Protects the Future

“Together, we are protecting fish today so there will be fish tomorrow.”

Key Points:

- CMA helps prevent overfishing and destruction of habitats.
 - It promotes sustainable use of fisheries resources.
 - Future generations will benefit if the community acts now.
-

3.4 CMA Benefits Everyone—Men, Women, and Youth

“The CMA belongs to all of us—everyone must have a say.”

Key Points:

- Women are important actors in fishing (e.g., processing, financing, moral authority).

- Youth bring energy, innovation, and leadership potential.
 - CMA leadership must include both men and women.
 - Inclusive decision-making leads to better outcomes and stronger compliance.
-

3.5 CMA Builds Unity and Trust

“When we make and enforce our own rules, we reduce conflict and build peace.”

Key Points:

- CMA structures resolve disputes locally, reducing dependence on external actors.
 - Encourages dialogue and consensus-building.
 - Supports better relations between fishers, processors, leaders, and regulators.
-

3.6 CMA Links Local to National

“You’re not alone—NaFAA and partners are with you.”

Key Points:

- CMA is a partnership with NaFAA.
 - Government support includes:
 - Legal guidance
 - Training and tools
 - Access to funding mechanisms
 - CMA decisions must align with national laws and NaFAA regulations.
-

3.7 CMA is not a Threat to Existing Leadership Arrangement

“The CMA will strengthen leadership. It is built on what already exists.”

Key Points:

- The introduction of the CMA is not an attempt to sideline existing fisheries leaders.
 - Instead, the CMA is designed to recognize and formalize local leadership within a legal framework, in partnership with NaFAA.
 - The goal is to build on the existing governance setup, adding structure, legitimacy, and sustainability through:
 - Democratic participation
 - Good governance principles
 - Transparency and accountability
 - Current fisherfolk leaders, together with the wider fishing community, have the opportunity to put themselves forward for the many available roles within the CMA structure.
-

4. CMA PRE-FORMATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Overview

A CMA is built on an organizational structure that ensures fair, transparent, and inclusive decision-making in the management of fisheries resources. Before a CMA is formally established and recognized by NaFAA, a series of preparatory activities must take place. The pre-formation phase lays the foundation for strong, and effective CMA governance. This section outlines the pre-formation elements, the core governance structure, and the various thematic committees

4.1 CMA Pre-Formation Processes

For a CMA to be formally recognized, proponents must undertake several preparatory activities:

- Stakeholder engagement, awareness creation, and mobilization
- Formation of interim planning or technical groups
- Development of constitution and by-laws
- Nominations for executive and thematic committee roles
- Conduct of CMA elections and inauguration

These early steps rely heavily on volunteers and interested individuals who are willing to contribute time, ideas, and leadership during the setup phase.

4.2 CMA Executive Structure

The CMA is led by an Executive Committee, elected by the county and supported by thematic subcommittees. Below are the positions² that will be up for nomination and election when time is due.

CMA Executive Positions:

Chairperson	Leads CMA operations, chairs meetings, and represents the CMA externally.
Vice Chairperson	Supports the Chairperson and steps in during his/her absence.
Secretary	Takes minutes, maintains records, and manages communications.
Treasurer	Manages CMA funds, ensures transparency in financial transactions.

4.3 CMA Committees and Roles

To ensure efficient operation and specialization, the CMA may establish the following standing committees. These may vary slightly depending on local context and needs. The committees will also offer positions for nomination and election.

A. Surveillance and Enforcement Committee

- Monitors fishing activities within the CMA area.

² The executive leadership of each CMA shall hold office for a term not exceeding three years and may be re-elected for a second term only.

- Reports illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- Works closely with NaFAA, local authorities, and fishers.

B. Conflict Resolution Committee

- Mediates disputes among fishers and community members.
- Promotes peaceful co-existence and adherence to CMA rules.
- Collaborates with traditional leaders where needed.

C. Gender and Inclusion Committee

- Promotes equal participation of women and youth.
- Ensures gender-responsive planning and representation in decision-making.
- Organizes training or awareness for women in leadership.

D. Finance and Administration Committee

- Assists the Treasurer in managing CMA revenue and budgets.
- Prepares financial reports and ensures transparency.
- Manages records such as fines and grants.

E. Environmental Management or Science Committee (*optional*)

- Guides sustainable fishing practices and habitat protection.
 - Supports data collection and fish stock monitoring with NaFAA or partners.
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4.4 Zonal Coordinators: Bridging the CMA and the Community

Who are Zonal Coordinators?

Zonal Coordinators are community-based focal persons appointed or elected to represent specific towns or villages within the CMA area. They serve as the link between the CMA leadership and local fishing communities, especially in geographically spread-out coastal areas.

Why Zonal Coordinators Matter

In many communities, distance, limited transport, or communication gaps can hinder full participation in CMA affairs. Zonal Coordinators ensure that no group or village is left behind by bringing the CMA closer to the people.

Key Roles and Responsibilities:

- Organize and support community meetings, ensuring participation from their zone.
 - Share CMA decisions, updates, and messages with fisherfolk in their locality.
 - Document local fishing activities, conflicts, or violations and report to CMA leadership.
 - Work with the Surveillance Committee to identify and report illegal fishing or harmful practices.
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4.5 National CMA Advisory Body

Away from the county-level CMA structure is the National CMA Advisory Board. It is the highest decision-making authority in Liberia's fisheries co-management framework.

Established under NaFAA’s governance system, this body plays a critical role in guiding national-level CMA policies and ensuring that the co-management system remains aligned with both governance principles and sustainability goals.

Core Mandate

The Advisory Body, which meets quarterly, is responsible for:

- Advising NaFAA on the management and utilization of fishery resources.
- Reviewing and approving policies, plans, programs, and reports related to CMA activities.

Composition

The Advisory Body comprises 13 members drawn from a diverse set of national institutions and stakeholder groups:

- NaFAA,
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Liberia Maritime Authority,
- Liberia Coast Guard,
- Ministry of Justice, and
- Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- Network of CMAs,
- Liberia Artisanal Fishermen Association,
- Academia,
- CSOs,
- Legislative committees (Senate and House of Representatives) on natural resource

The Director General of NaFAA serves as Secretary to the Board

Key Takeaway:

The Advisory Board does not manage local CMAs. Rather, it serves as a national policy oversight mechanism, ensuring that the CMA framework remains institutionally supported, nationally coordinated and aligned with sustainable fisheries management

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 Why Stakeholder Roles Matter

The success of the CMA depends on shared responsibilities. Every actor—government, community, traditional leaders, CSOs, and others—has a specific role to play. Facilitators must clearly explain these roles to community members during awareness and mobilization sessions.

5.2 The Role of NaFAA (National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority)

NaFAA is the lead national agency that:

- Legally establishes CMAs and provides recognition.
- Develops fisheries policies and management frameworks.
- Supports capacity building through training and education.
- Allocates 30% of fishing licensing fees to support CMA operations.
- Provides technical guidance, oversight, and conflict resolution support.
- Ensures CMA plans comply with national laws and standards.

Key Message: “NaFAA is your national partner. They empower communities and go on to support and supervise that things are done legally.”

5.3 The Role of Local Government Authorities

County and district authorities:

- Support development of landing sites, fish markets, and infrastructure.
- Integrate fishers’ needs into local development plans.
- Help enforce fisheries rules and CMA by-laws.

Key Message: “The local government is your local bridge to services and logistics. They work alongside the CMA to support your needs.”

5.4 The Role of Traditional Leaders

These leaders:

- Promote traditional norms and taboos that support sustainable fishing.
- Resolve conflicts among fishers.
- Act as liaisons between the CMA and the community.
- Help uphold discipline, values, and trust.

Key Message: “Traditional leaders have always guided our fishing ways. Now, they help blend tradition with formal co-management.”

5.5 The Role of Fisherfolk (including women)

Fisherfolk are the primary resource users and central actors. Their responsibilities include

- Contributing to fisheries management approaches
- Adhering to CMA rules and national fishery laws.
- Using approved fishing gear and respecting closed seasons.
- Supporting awareness against child labor and use of children at sea.
- Reporting illegal fishing to CMA leadership.

Key Message: “This is your fishery. You are the front line in making the CMA work.”

5.6 Why Women should be part of the CMA

Women

- Own and finance fishing boats.
- Process and market fish.
- Fisheries cover fishing, fish processing, and fish mongering
- Hold moral influence in household and community decisions.

Key Message: “Women are not only helpers—they are leaders, entrepreneurs, and community guardians. CMA must reflect that.”

5.7 The Role of CSOs, NGOs, and Development Partners

These actors serve as change agents:

- Facilitate training, resource mobilization, and capacity building.
- Provide technical support and strategic advice.
- Help design CMA management plans and by-laws.
- Monitor and report on implementation progress.

Key Message: “Civil society and NGOs are here to support you. They bring tools, ideas, and connections.”

6. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR AWARENESS CREATION

Overview

Awareness creation is the first major phase in the formation of a Collaborative Management Association (CMA). It ensures that all stakeholders understand the CMA concept, see its benefits, and are prepared to support or participate in its establishment.

This section provides a practical, field-ready guide for BOs and facilitators to engage communities effectively, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity, dialogue, and clarity.

Step 1: Community Entry

Objective: Introduce yourself, the project, and the purpose of your visit. Obtain buy-in from community institutions.

Activities:

- Engage local government, traditional leaders, lead fisherfolk³, and opinion leaders.
- Hold an introductory meeting with the community leaders on the CMA concept.
- Get these actors to appreciate the CMA concept and be its advocates

Key Message: “We’re here to support the community in working with NaFAA to manage fisheries together.”

Step 2: Sensitization Meetings

Objective: Present the concept of CMA and stimulate initial interest.

Activities:

- Host a general community sensitization meeting.
- Use simple language and relate CMA to local realities.
- Present the benefits of CMA, including sustainability, resource control, and income security.
- Emphasize the inclusion of women and youth.

Tips for Facilitators:

- Use real-life examples from other CMA counties⁴.
 - Keep the meeting participatory: invite questions.
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³ Lead fisherfolk consist of (i) the fishing chief and his cabinet, (ii) the fish chairlady and her cabinet, and (iii) the chairperson and executives of fishing cooperatives

⁴ Reference to the CMA learning tours organized by LFGP (in December 2024) to Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, and Montserrado counties

Step 3: Community Dialogues and Group Discussions

Objective: Deepen understanding through focused, smaller group conversations.

Activities:

- Engage the separate focus groups: (i) canoe owners & captains, (ii) fish processors and mongers, (iii) fishing cooperatives, and (iv) fishing crew and youth.
 - Allow groups to express views, concerns, and expectations.
 - Collect ideas on how the community sees its role in the CMA.
 - Identify local champions and potential leaders for future CMA structures.
-

Step 4: Feedback Collection and Reporting

Objective: Document community feedback and report to LFGP.

Activities:

- Summarize community concerns, misconceptions, and suggestions.
 - Take note of participants who show interest in leadership or further training.
-

Facilitator's Reminders:

- Always obtain consent and inform intended groups ahead of time.
 - Be culturally sensitive and respect local norms and taboos.
 - Involve both men and women equally in every step.
 - Avoid overloading sessions with too much information—simplicity is key.
-

7. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Overview

After awareness creation, the next critical phase is community mobilization. This is the process of organizing, engaging, and preparing the community to formally participate in the creation and operation of a CMA.

Mobilization turns understanding into collective action—laying the foundation for representation, rule-setting, and local ownership.

Step 1: Interest towards the CMA

Objective: Confirm community readiness and identify trusted, active individuals to support CMA formation processes

Activities:

- Facilitate engagements with the respective focus groups⁵:
- Describe the CMA organizational structure and its constituent thematic committees
- Reiterate community ownership and the active roles required of fisherfolk
- Ask participants to indicate interest⁶ in contributing actively to the CMA pre-formation processes
 - Volunteering⁷ for planning meetings and serving on interim structures

Tip: Document names and contacts of interested individuals, disaggregated by gender.

Step 2: Facilitating Community Consultations

Objective: Solicit community perspectives towards deepening fisheries governance.

Activities:

- Organize general community consultation.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how they would like to be represented in the CMA structure.
- Discuss:
 - Common fishing challenges
 - Current practices and taboos
 - Ideas for local fisheries rules
 - Expectations for resource use and conservation

Key Message: “The CMA will be your own local body to make decisions about fishing in your waters.”

⁵ As captured in **Step 3** of Section 6

⁶ Communities and individuals are not to be compelled into it

⁷ Volunteers and interested individuals will be engaged and convened to Greenville for further CMA pre-formation processes. Related costs will be on the project.

Facilitator's Reminders:

- Keep mobilization activities inclusive and respectful.
 - Use local, everyday language to explain legal terms.
 - Allow plenty of time for consultations—do not rush decisions.
-

8. TOOLS AND METHODS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Overview

To successfully engage communities in the CMA process, facilitators must use effective, inclusive, and culturally appropriate tools and methods. These tools help explain complex ideas, spark meaningful discussion, and ensure everyone—from elders to youth—can participate and understand.

This section presents practical techniques and tools that facilitators can use throughout awareness and mobilization activities.

8.1 Interactive Community Meetings

Description: Utilize open forums where community members gather to listen, ask questions, and share views.

Key Features:

- Use simple, local language.
- Allow open dialogue.

Tip: Always summarize key points at the end to reinforce understanding.

8.2 Storytelling and Oral Narratives

Description: Use of local stories, proverbs, or analogies to explain CMA concepts.

Example:

- "Just as a canoe rows faster when everyone paddles in rhythm, the landscape thrives when it manages its fisheries together."

Benefits:

- Resonates with cultural norms.
 - Makes abstract concepts relatable.
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8.3 Visual Aids and Flipcharts

Description: Pictorial tools to support explanation and improve understanding.

Tools to Use:

- Flipchart sketches, where applicable, showing or illustrating relevant aspects of the CMA narrative

Tip: Use visuals with little text so everyone—including those who can't read—can understand.

Tips for Delivering Messages:

Tip	Description
Use stories	Share real-life experiences from other CMA counties (stories and lessons picked up from the CMA learning tour).
Repeat messages	Repetition helps with retention—don't assume one mention is enough.
Use analogies	Example: "A CMA is like your town council, but for the fishery sector."
Encourage participation	Ask questions to check understanding and promote dialogue.
Visual support	Use charts and illustrations to make messages memorable.

Facilitator's Reminders:

- Choose tools that suit the audience's literacy level and culture.
 - Combine at least 2–3 tools per session to increase engagement.
 - Be flexible—if one method isn't working, try another.
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LIBERIA FISHERIES GOVERNANCE PROJECT

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