

Community Self-identification (CSI)

The CSI process should include everyone (women, men, youth, and minority groups) from all the different units within the community.



Community self-identification (CSI) is the first step in Liberia to get legal recognition of your customary land. Self-identification is the way your community can identify your customary land. This process is regulated by the Liberian Land Authority (LLA) and involves six key steps.

Step 1 Community Profile

Your community should collect important information: name of community, location, leadership, brief history, languages, and other important information. This will help promote cohesion within community members as you discuss and agree upon key features of your identity.

Activities you should do;

- Hold community meetings that include all sections (villages, towns, sections, etc) and stakeholders (women, men, youth, minorities and the elders).
- The community should meet and document their leadership structure, history, different groups and livelihood activities.

Step 2 Community Awareness

The purpose of this step is to tell everybody in your community about the self-identification process so that they can participate.

Activities you should do;

- Organize general meetings with members of your community, during which each unit (chiefdom, clan, towns or villages) sub-group (hunters, minority ethnic group) and estimated population are required to send representatives.
- Select a committee of trusted members of the community that will help take the community through self-identification.

Step 3 Community Determines level of Community Self-identification

The purpose of this step is for community units (villages, towns, sections) to agree on how to define their community and their customary land.

Activities you should do;

- Hold a general meeting with representation from all units to discuss the benefits and challenges about self-identification (see box) and decide what makes up your community: villages, towns, sections.

- Hold meetings in smaller units to validate the agreement from the general meeting.
- Once you have agreed on how to define your community, hold a large meeting (with representation of all units within the community) to document your agreement.

Step 4 Identification of Community Land Area

The purpose of this step is for your community to identify your community land.

Activities you should do;

- Hold a large meeting with a cross section (women, youth, farmers, hunters, traditional leaders, herbalists, blacksmith, minority group, and other community based land management bodies. i.e. CFDC, and CFMB) of your community, including representation from the different units in the community to prepare sketch maps of your customary land indicating all the important features: villages, towns, sacred areas, water bodies, forest, concessions, roads, hospitals.
- Hold a general meeting in each unit (i.e. villages/towns) of your community to share findings from the sketch map.

Step 5 Declaration of Identity as Land-Owning Community

The purpose of this step is to bring your community self-identification process to a close.

Activities you should do;

- Prepare and sign an official agreement/MoU between all units (village, towns, and sections) in your community agreeing to do work together as one land owning community.
- Share a copy of your signed agreement to relevant authorities like customary leaders (clan and paramount Chiefs), county authority (superintendents and commissioners), and the local LLA office.

Step 6 Review and Verification of Community Self-Identification Process

After your community has completed the self-identification steps, the Land Authority will verify that your community has carried out all of the community self-identification activities as described in this poster.

Benefits and Challenges of Identifying at Different Levels/Sizes

Benefits

To be part of a self-identified community provides you strength to negotiate for your customary land with external actors:

- It empowers you to manage your natural resources in an effective way
- It brings people together and builds community cohesion
- It helps to reach a common understanding of where one community ends and another community begins.

Challenges

Communities should think carefully about the size at which they identify because:

- The bigger in size (District or Chiefdom) you are as self-identified community the harder it is to hold meetings and agree on matters
- If the size is too small (Village or Town) the community may not be able to benefit from its common resources
- Self-identification is time consuming and can dig up land conflict if not handled with care.