

Making the Forest Sector Transparent



Annual Transparency Report Card 2009 Ghana

Introduction

Characteristics of Ghana's Forests

Forests are immensely important, both to society and the environment: they play a vital role in enriching the natural resources that support life on earth; millions of people are wholly or largely dependent on forest resources for their livelihoods; and, increasingly, we are coming to learn of their role in combating climate change. In short, we are all highly dependent on their existence and survival.

However, citizens of forest-rich-but-poor countries often have minimal information about forest management in their country, preventing them from holding government and business accountable. Indeed, in most developing countries with poor governance structures and weak enforcement regimes, vested interest of business and government officials have contrived to deny citizens the full benefit of economic returns from their forest resources.

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The Project

Making the Forest Sector Transparent is a four-year project that supports civil society groups in forest-rich countries to engage with policy makers and advocate for accountable forest

The forest sector in Ghana is the fourth largest foreign exchange earner for the country. This contribution however comes mainly from the formal forest sub-sector consisting of regulated industries in timber and timber products. The informal sub-sector, characterised by small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) broadly covering wood forest products, non-wood forest products and forest services, is largely neglected even though their contribution to livelihoods and resource sustainability, arguably outweighs that of the formal forest sub-sector.



sector governance. It is currently piloted in four countries – Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and Peru. The project takes a people-centred approach to assessing the level of public access to information through designing and piloting a transparency report card. Using this methodology, the project will be able to assess the scale of the problem of forest governance; assess the extent to which efforts to improve

transparency in the forest sector are working; identify cases of good practice by some governments; and explore possibilities for extension and replication of good practices.

As part of the project in Ghana, a transparency report card was developed to assess and compare disclosure of information on forest use and management in selected communities in the Western and Brong Ahafo Regions of Ghana.

The Purpose of the Report Card

This Report Card is intended to assess and compare disclosure of information on forest use and management in Ghana. It enables the comparison between the quality, quantity, and accessibility of forest sector information provided to the public in Ghana and the other participating countries. The report presents what information is available or not, and assesses the usefulness of available evidence for transparency and governance purposes.

The Report Card is mainly based on objective “yes/no” questions about the availability and reliability of information, and provides both a common basis for country comparisons with other project countries and flexibility to support initiatives in Ghana. The main area of focus for the Ghana assessment were examination of the policies, laws, resource access and benefit sharing arrangement, interrogating the availability, accessibility and reliability of information in these areas.

It is hoped that the report card will provide the forest authorities information to gauge the public perception of its openness and become a useful monitoring tool. Civil society will also find in the report card information to effectively engage in evidence based advocacy.

How information was collected

A set of five final questionnaire templates were designed, each one relevant to a specific stakeholder group (see Box 1). The questionnaires typically contain over 100 questions, divided into sections on economic, institutional, socio-cultural, environmental, and legal / policy dimensions. Those transparency indicators common to all countries and of relevance to these stakeholder groups were included.

Box 1 Stakeholder Groups

- Community stakeholders
- Officials of the Office of Administrator of Stool Lands and Forestry Commission
- District Assemblies
- Traditional Authorities
- Timber Companies

Box 2

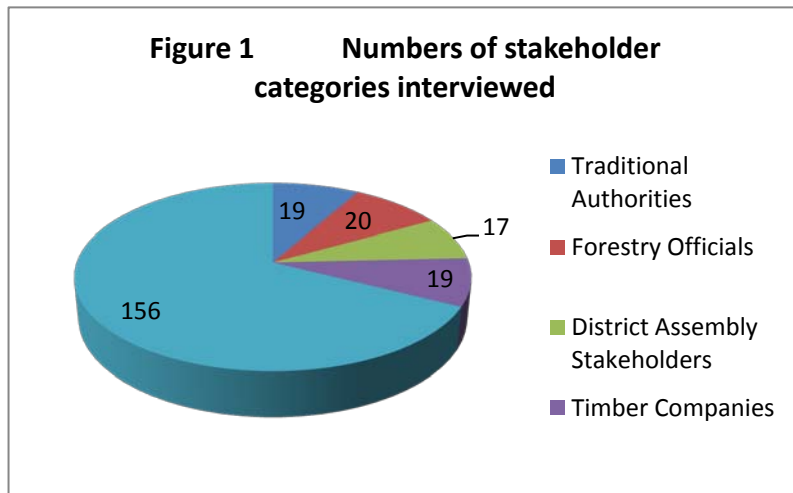
Administrative Districts for field exercise

Tarkwa Nsuaem
Wassa Amanfi East
Juabeso
Sunyani Municipal
Goaso
Dormaa

CIKOD and six local NGOs (Conservation Foundation, New Generation Concern, Rural Environmental Care Association, Abesim Youth and Afforestation Brigade, Mariajoe Socio-Dev and Sunyani Forest Forum), worked together to collect information from different sources, and within the different stakeholder groupings. Two approaches were taken. For the communities, a series of focus group discussions were held, whereas for the others, individual key informants were interviewed. The stakeholders interviewed include the following:

1. Forestry Commission (FC)
 - o **National:** Operations Director and Director, Donor Relations
 - o **Regional:** Regional Manager and Manager, Timber Industry Development Division in the Brong Ahafo and Western Regions
 - o **District:** District Managers, Range Supervisor and Customer Services Officer at the district level
2. Office of Administrator of Stool Lands: Regional and District Directors
3. Timber companies etc: Timber companies, Timber loggers, Chain saw/Domestic Lumber Operators and Wood Workers Association
4. District Assembly officials: Planning Officer, Finance officer, Coordinating Director
5. Traditional authorities and stool land owners: divisional/stool land owners, Odikros (chiefs) and Queen Mothers
6. Community stakeholders: women, men, youth, District Assembly Members, Unit Committee Members, indigenous institutions.

The numbers of the different stakeholders involved in the study is depicted in Figure 1



Limitations

The full analysis of the field information was carried out using an SPSS software package to collate and analyse the specific responses of different stakeholders. The result of this analysis was used together with available desk information (published and unpublished) and field experiences of CIKOD to compile this report which was shared at a stakeholder workshop on 24 June 2010.

This report is based on research and assessments up to December 2009 but the analysis is done up to June 2010. Some developments, such as progress made on the Freedom of Information Bill, are therefore not reflected in this report but will be reported in the 2010 annual report. It is acknowledged that the report reflects the perspectives of respondents and therefore may not be the complete measure of the efforts of forest managers. Yet it is a good yardstick for the measurement of the public

perception of the effectiveness of governance in the sector. This report covers 2009; it is hoped that subsequent annual reports will help to measure the trends in improvements or otherwise of transparency in the forest sector in Ghana.

Findings

Enabling Framework for Transparency

The general democratic environment in Ghana encourages demands for accountability and transparency. However, the legislative framework is limiting and does not yet match the demands of public need for information and disclosure.

Freedom of Information

The Constitution of Ghana guarantees the right to information to all citizens. Article 21 (1)f of the constitution states that "all persons shall have the right to information, subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary in a democratic society." However there is no Freedom of Information Law. A Freedom of Information Bill has been approved by Cabinet (on 3rd November 2009) but is yet to be laid in Parliament. The Cabinet approved document is not yet a public one (even though some CSOs have copies through informal sources). It only becomes public when it is ready to be laid in Parliament. The Bill has been in discussion for almost 10 years. It remains to be seen how long it will take for the Bill to be finally laid in parliament and passed into law.

There is a Civil Society coalition advocating for the passage of the Bill. The Coalition on the Right to Information - Ghana, is spearheaded by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative Africa Office and various influential civil society organisations and interest groups¹. The Coalition comprises a host of different organisations from media rights specialists to religious societies. Established in 2003, the Coalition has sought to promote enhanced accountability and transparency in Government, as well as greater participation in the democratic process through advancing the need for the right to information legislation. The Coalition has since its inception undertaken a series of advocacy activities including regional workshops in Ho, Cape Coast, Kumasi, Sunyani, Koforidua and Takoradi, focus-group discussions with religious groups in Accra, formulated simplified publications on the right to information and issued media releases for public education. The Coalition has also endeavoured to serve as a civil society lobbying agent during high-profile meetings with the Parliamentary select committee on Legal and Constitutional affairs, the Minister of Justice and the Attorney-General's department.

The Whistleblower Act, 2006 (Act 720) is an important supportive legislation for transparency. This law was passed by Parliament and given assent on 20th October 2006. However, not too long

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¹http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/international/laws_papers/ghana/consolidated_critique_to_rti_draft_bill_ghana.pdf

after its passage there have been concerns as to whether the act will be able to provide an adequate environment for effective whistle-blowing. Coupled with this is the fact that whistle-blowing is a new concept and there is the need to work with the general populace to understand and take advantage of the opportunity it offers to report cases of impropriety.

Given the absence of any compelling legislation on freedom of information the oath of secrecy required to be sworn and subscribed to by public and civil servants as contained in art 286 (6 j) and 286 (7) of the 1992 Constitution, has quite often been used by public officials as a refuge to limit the level of transparency on issues including forestry information.

Sector specific transparency laws and statements

The Forestry Commission has a Service Charter which indicates the service (and quality of service) they offer their stakeholders. A New Service Charter developed in 2008 provides for customers' right to information from the Forestry Commission. The earlier service charter (2005) was also translated into local languages but the current version is only in English.

It is obvious that the current service charter of the Forestry Commission has lost a great deal of the details that were in the previous charter as a result of the government's quest to have a uniform charter across the various state enterprises. In the event some of the specific disclosure and reporting requirements included in the previous charter are missing in the new one.

Forest Legal and Policy Framework

The 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy, is generally regarded as an accurate statement of the shared aspirations of Ghanaians for the sector, and it recognises the right of citizens' participation in forest resources management. However, in contrast to the policies on industrial logging, the element of citizen's rights has never been translated into law.

There is no single forest law but a number of legislative texts that govern forestry. There is a current review process on-going as part of the VPA implementation aimed at consolidating the laws. The Forestry Commission website contains much of the parent and subsidiary legislation that regulates forestry in Ghana.

Responding to the question whether the laws on forestry are available, all forestry officials and district assembly staff answered in the affirmative. However only 6 out of the 18 traditional chiefs responding to the question, answered yes, while 83% of community respondents indicated that they knew laws exist but these are not available to them.

Interestingly, even at the district offices of Forestry Commission, copies of laws and the policy are not available as official documents, but some officers do have personal copies of some of these documents. However, several manuals of procedure (MOPs) are available at FC offices and on the FC website².

² www.fcghana.com. Most of the forestry related legislation and policy are published on this site.

An important policy of the Forestry Commission is the promotion of collaborative forest management, but responses from the field work indicate that community members are critically unaware of that position and the FC has a long way to go to explain the policy position to forest fringe communities. Eighty one community members answered the question on awareness of the policy on collaborative forest management of which 74 (91%) answered no.

Access to Decision Making Process

A tell-tale result from the field summarises the perspective of the public in relation to decision making in the forest sector in Ghana. Responding to the question on whether they were aware of how decisions on resource allocation is made and whether they thought the process was transparent, only 6% said they knew the process and 4% (see table 1 &2) thought the process was transparent – not surprisingly the positive respondents were all forestry officials. Even forestry staff submitted that decision making is quite non-transparent.

Table 1: Is the decision-making process transparent?

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid yes	4	1.7	4.3
no	89	38.5	95.7
Total	93	40.3	100.0
Non response	138	59.7	
Total	231	100.0	

Table 2: Is it clear who decides if/when to make decisions?

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid yes	6	2.6	6.5
no	86	37.2	93.5
Total	92	39.8	100.0
Non response	139	60.2	
Total	231	100.0	

An emerging national forest forum comprising representation of members from various forums at the district level gives hope of better civil society involvement in decision making. Though currently the character of forum is not very national especially because only few districts have forest forums (35 to date) and also because the processes for representation requires streamlining. One national forest forum meeting was held in 2009, but ‘executives of the forum’ met 3 times in the year.

There is a complete lack of consultation in decision making (table 3) and so mere establishment of forest forums would not guarantee that decision making would become transparent – the forums

and civil society need to engage decision makers better to effect change in the decision making culture.

Table 3: Is there a stakeholder consultation process?

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	6	2.6	6.5
	no	87	37.7	93.5
	Total	93	40.3	100.0
Non-response	138	59.7		
Total	231	100.0		

Land and forest tenure

Another area where transparency is key in the forest sector of Ghana relates to land and forest tenure. In general there is recognition in law (the 1992 Constitution) of the custodianship of land by traditional authorities (stool chiefs) who hold the land in trust for the people. Those who have usufruct rights to the land are also to a large extent identifiable by a combination of constitutional provisions, common law principles and customary law. However, there is a plethora of land laws in Ghana which tend to confuse the issues on land ownership and use³. It should be noted though that the concept of ownership of land (and forest land) for that matter in Ghana is quite complicated. Custodianship of land (which is vested in stool chiefs) is gradually being interpreted to mean private ownership and this is causing a lot of confusion in several communities.

³ The Ghana Country Environmental Analysis (World Bank 2007), estimates that there are approximately 166 land laws in Ghana dealing with land issues (p.110)

Even though forest tenure and ownership, are not under intense debate currently, it is a subject recognised by government and all stakeholders as important to deal with as quickly as possible.

There is an on-going project – the Land Administration Project - which among others is to document and streamline land ownership and improve documentation, but it does not deal with a fundamental issue of ownership, custodianship, and usufruct rights.

All respondents to the question, "Is most forest land under a clear ownership title?" said **NO**, except for one paramount chief who was insistent that the land belongs to the living, dead and unborn and that chiefs are the embodiment of these and therefore have bona fide ownership.

Table 4 shows a categorisation of land ownership in Ghana as contained in the 1999 Land Policy. Thus apart from wildlife reserves for which the state permanently acquires the land, the state has no direct ownership of land yet the timber and mineral resources are vested in the President and held in trust for the people and managed by state agencies.

Table 4: Land Ownership/entitlement in Ghana

Land category	Ownership	Area (1,000 km ²)	Percent (%)
Forest reserves	Stools and Skins	26	11
Wildlife reserves	State	12	5
Off reserve forest	Communities	5	2
Tree crops	Communities	17	7
Annual crops	Communities	12	5
Bush fallow and others	Communities	60	25
Savanna woodland	Stools/Skins/Community	71	30
Unimproved pasture	Communities	36	15
Total		239	100

Source: Ministry of Lands and Forestry, 1999⁴.

There are several forest tenure related disputes between the state and communities, communities and timber companies, among timber companies over concessions, etc. but perhaps a more classical example of forest tenure dispute is to be found in the disagreement between chiefs in some parts of Western region, where, in the 1970s the military regime converted areas that were considered protected timber land (PTL) into forest reserves.

The PTLs were forest lands that were declared protected in the early 1950s with the intention that they would be released for farming once the timber was removed from

⁴ Ministry of Lands and Forestry (1999) National Land Policy, Accra.

them. However, a military decree in 1974 declared all those areas as statutory forest reserves. The chiefs of the area, who disagreed with the decision, sold off these lands to migrant farmers for cocoa cultivation. In the event those reserves are currently denuded of any trees apart from they becoming individual cocoa farms. This is in spite of several military/police operation aimed at destroying these farms, some of which have turned violent.

Resource Allocation

The transparency of the permit allocation process is a key factor in natural resource governance. The timber resource allocation system was reformed under Act 547, Timber Resource Management Act, 1997 (amended by Act 617 2002). Under this Act, the timber resource is allocated competitively and the contract holder enters into a contract (Timber Utilisation Contract) with the Government to utilize and manage the timber resource on stated Terms and Conditions. The regulations to guide the implementation of Act 547 are contained in Legislative Instrument, 1649, (amended by LI 1721 (2002).

These provisions notwithstanding, there has been little compliance in the implementation of the law, such that the allocation of timber resources has continued to be through administrative and ministerial directives. With the ratification of the VPA by Ghana and the EU and its requirements for legality assurance and licensing, it is hoped that the VPA will become a useful instrument in ensuring adherence to the allocation procedure elaborated in law.

Permits for timber resources and some NTFPs are clearly indicated but for other

NTFPs and environmental services there is no clarity on the permit regime. For timber resources specified FC officials are identified within limits what permits they can and cannot give on behalf of the Chief Executive of the FC. But for the NTFPs a lot of discretionary power is given the District Forest Manager.

Responses to different questions relating to resource allocation point to a perception that allocation of timber and other resources are shrouded in complete secrecy.

Table 5: Questions relating to timber resource allocation

Question	Response (%)	
	Yes	No
Knowledge of competitive bidding	8.4	91.6
Awareness of the assessment process	6.3	93.7
Awareness of announcements for competitive bidding	26.3	73.7
Knowledge of management plans for TUCs	1.1	98.9
Awareness of TUCs in local area	3.9	96.1
Information on size of allocation, species and volume	5.6	94.4
Awareness of the legal status of concessions in area	1.3	98.7
Information on implementation public	5.7	94.3
Any consultation before allocation of forest resource	4.8	95.2

With the exception of announcements on competitive bidding, where a quarter of the respondents indicated their awareness, (and this is barely surprising because the advertisements are placed in the newspapers), the rest of all the issues of transparency on timber allocation over 90%

of respondents had no knowledge of what is happening.

There is a process defined in law for the allocation of timber permits but this is hardly followed. Farmers are particularly ignored in the consultation process. Communities were adamant in the field survey that permits for non timber forest products are given only to those who can pay officials.

For timber, a Timber Rights Evaluation committee (TREC) is established but this is not independent - the Ministry and Forestry Commission largely control the TREC. Where there is a public competitive bidding process it is open to the public. The result of the process is usually published in the national dailies. But the responses from the survey were emphatic that the allocation process is not transparent. This is apparently because there are only a few TUCs allocated through the competitive bidding process.

The final contracts are rectified by parliament but the contract document is usually not available to the general public. Responses from the field including the district level Forestry staff was the specific contracts of individual TUC holders are not public

By law farmers are consulted and their approval sought before an area is given out as TUC for logging operations, but in practice this process is by-passed. It is only when farmers raise issues that they are roped in.

Information on how much timber is allocated is not available to the general public even though district officers have that information



Revenue collection and redistribution

Stemming from the recognition of land ownership by stools and communities land revenue including forest revenue is enshrined in the 1992 constitution. The formula for calculating the share of royalties is laid out in the constitution as in the table 6:

Table 6: Constitutional Distribution of Land revenue		
District Assembly	Stool Chief	Traditional Authority
55%	25%	20%

There are two major issues with this. The first is that the Forestry Commission has sole power to determine the share it claims for its operating costs, and controversially this stands at 50% (60% for reserves and 40% for off-reserves). Thus the redistribution formula is in effect:

Table 7: De-facto distribution of revenue

		Land owners share as in the constitution		
Forestry Commission	OASL	District assembly	Stool chief	Traditional authority
50%	5%	24.75%	11.25%	9%

The second issue is that information on the actual volumes of timber extracted, and therefore that calculation of royalties to which these formulae are applied, is kept within the Commission. No one can independently verify the appropriate revenue due. The final redistribution figures are typically published one year in arrears.

The level of awareness of revenue from timber royalties is very high among the different stakeholders except community members. Answering the question “Do you know about revenue from timber royalties?” only a third of community members responded “Yes” and 74% of chiefs had knowledge of royalties. (Table 8)

Table 8: Knowledge of revenue from timber royalties

Stakeholder	Number of respondents answering		Total
	Yes	No	
Traditional Authorities	14	5	19
District Assembly Stakeholders	15	0	15
Community Stakeholders	68	88	156
Timber Company	19	0	19
Forestry Officials	17	0	17
Total	133	93	226

Of all those who know about royalties, only 18% were actually aware of a constitutional backing for the proportions of distribution and who the recipients should be. For community members less than 10% (9.6%) knew about this constitutional provision.

Social Responsibility Agreements

Direct benefit sharing arrangements between communities and logging companies are in the form of Social Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and according to the law these should equate to 5% of the royalties due. These agreements typically follow consultation with at least the local chief (and often with the paramount chief as well) in deciding what the SRA should be used for. The consultations are held before the timber companies start operations and are usually one-off events, so are rarely revised during the 40 year concession duration.

Field interviews indicated that although most respondents (76%) are not aware of the specific legal obligation on SRAs, it was generally accepted that in practice legal timber operators are required to (and do) fulfil some social obligations to communities in which they operate.

It is interesting note that there were varying levels of awareness on the social responsibilities of the timber operators among the different stakeholder groupings. Timber Companies and Forestry Commission Officials interviewed know Timber Royalties, SRA and compensations with the exception of District OASL who does not know SRA.

The District Assembly, Traditional Authority and community stakeholders interviewed also knew of royalties and compensation but few did not know SRAs and apart from Forestry Commission Officials and few Timber Companies (loggers) the other

respondents did not know how Timber Royalties are calculated.

Publication of revenue disbursement

The Forestry Commission has elaborated several services in its Service Charter which it provides to its clients. In the Charter the FC identifies publication of materials, and reports as a key communication tool with the public. Performance monitoring on these services however, is not within the capacity of the forest fringe communities and several characteristics of the FC operations point to the non-fulfilment of the tenets of the Service Charter.

Notwithstanding, a distinguishing feature of the Forestry Commission in the last 4-5 years has been the consistent publication (albeit delayed) of the half-yearly disbursement and distribution of timber revenue to the statutory stakeholders. The figures are published in quite a detail and contain the right and accurate information. The only difficulty is that it is usually way behind scheduled. For instance the latest publication actually covers the first half year of 2008.

However only 3% of all respondents knew about the publication of these revenues and no respondent had used the information contained in the publication. In districts where there is a Customer Services Officer copies of the publications are kept in the offices but these are not publicly displayed and not many people know about the publication

Social responsibility requirements and their payment are however not published. This sometimes leaves even communities who are recipients of SRAs in the dark as to who has received how much on their behalf.

Conclusions

Using the traffic light system to assess Ghana along the nine transparency indicators of the project, Ghana scored green on three counts, amber on one and the rest were all red. On several counts the Ghana forestry sector needs to do more to improve transparency.

In general though, there is a good framework for transparency in the sector, yet operationally it does not work efficiently. Several factors were identified as contributing to this. These include the following.

- ***Commitment of public officials***

There is a general lack of leadership and commitment among public officials in Ghana, to providing information, consulting and actively engaging communities in decision making processes. This attitude is general across all levels of actors - politicians, top public sector executives, senior and junior managers and other officials. There is no law binding these actors. This is even more evident within the FC. The internal communication within the Commission is as bad as that between the Commission and the stakeholders. In the case of the relationship with the Forest Fringe Communities (FFCs), the FC does not seem to have any commitment at all to releasing information to the local people. Staff at the local level still keep and use information as a source of authority which must be jealously guarded

The elaboration of the Service Charter notwithstanding, the Forestry Commission is not very forthcoming with information to the Forest Fringe Communities. This reluctance is reinforced by the lack of demand for disclosure and accountability from

stakeholders and so the officials get away with the lack of openness.

- ***Access of poor forest users to information and government obligations***

The attitude of the FC staff is reinforced by the fact that poor forest users' rights of access to information, provide feedback, to be consulted and actively participate in policy-making on the one hand, and government's obligations to respond to them, on the other, as a requirement for a healthy government-citizens relations, are not backed by law. Similarly, there are no legal regulations identifying and governing respective roles and responsibilities of citizens and government from which institutions can be compelled to write down procedures compatible with legal regulations.

- ***General lack of platform for seeking redress***

In general, there is no oversight authority (like a regulatory body) that ensures that the FC performs its functions. Indeed, the FC both as a regulator and manager of the resource makes it a formidable organization which the local community cannot 'fight' against. There is no platform for the forest communities and other stakeholders to seek redress in case of any infractions.

It is worth noting though that reforms within the FC that have been undertaken recently, are helping to establish structures, like Customer Service Units which are supposed to fill the information gap and provide a platform for FFCs to have better access to the FC. Nevertheless, these structures are as useful as the Commission is pressurized to operationalize them, through a demanding civil society and stakeholders.

The network of forest forums, if they are going to be useful, need to be strengthened at the district level to reflect better representation of the people and deal with issues affecting the local communities. The National Forest Forum has to be restructured to provide a real platform for discussion of strategic issues in the sector. The national forum has to be organised as a series of events for engagement and decision making, rather than the current structure where it is constructed as an organisation with its executive members. A consultation process needs to be defined to culminate in the national forum.

- ***Communication channels remain ineffective***

There are channels of communication between FSD and other stakeholders like OASL, DA, TAs, Timber companies and communities e.g. meetings, correspondence but not all that effective. There is also channel of communication between other stakeholder groups but not the best.

Ordinary community members had no knowledge of the forest sector issues and so had not been involved in its implementation, thus are consciously not contributing to the sustainable and transparent management of the resources.

The absence of the inputs of Paramount Chiefs greatly affected responses of traditional authorities as the Odikros appear not to have direct contacts with FSD staff and Timber Companies. As a result their level of understanding and responses were far below expectations. The Queen mothers did not help the matter either because they complained of exclusion by their male counterparts in all matters dealing with Lands and Forest.

The District assemblies were generally knowledgeable on issues of revenue and corporate responsibility. However, specific forest-sector policy issues appear not to be a priority for them.

The Forest Services Division and the Office of Administrator of Stool lands showed they were on top of their sector.

- ***Low priority for environmental services***

The low consideration given for the environmental services provided by the forests in Ghana,(in contrast to the justification for the original designation of forest reserves in the early part of the 20th Century, which were as watershed protection areas, not to be logged,) has led to environmentally detrimental results, manifested in high rates of degradation and deforestation in Ghana. More recently, several arguments have been made for the environmental services function of the forest resources in Ghana to be valued but these have barely moved beyond the level of discussions.

With such poor coordination among different institutions responsible for different services provided by the forest it is not surprising that environmental services of the forest are given low priority.

With the emergence of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) as an important climate change mitigation measure as well as carbon trading, the rights to carbon has come up for discussion within Ghanaian civil society, but there is clearly no current basis in law for who actually owns the carbon in forest areas.

It was notable that some Forestry Commission personnel in the field expressed their lack of knowledge of international

agreements and processes, the REDD initiatives in particular.



Recommendations

The general recommendations are a listing of the issues that respondents identified as needed to improve the level of transparency within the forest sector in Ghana. Other recommendations involve suggestions to improve the data collection for the report card and enhance its contribution to support evidence based advocacy in the forest sector in Ghana.

General

Civil society organisations engaged in the forest society must be proactive in using all available means to press for transparent forest governance. Greater transparency will not just happen because there are provisions in the law for it, it has to be worked at. It is quite disappointing that in spite of several

years of publications of revenue disbursement by FC, for instance, no civil society group has used that information to demand accountability of the state, District assemblies or chiefs who receive these revenues. It is *necessary for civil society in the sector to combine efforts* to enhance their effectiveness in advocating for transparency.

The FC **must** devise effective means by scaling the barrier of inadequate resources and **intensify their education and awareness campaigns in the communities in response to the 1994 Forest and Wildlife policy of Collaborative Forest Management.** It is not enough to be very knowledgeable in the sector when others with whom you are to collaborate fall far behind you.

Communities and their leaders (for example Assembly members) should make demands of the different actors in the forest sector including timber companies, chiefs, district assemblies and Forestry Commission making use of the already available information. It is important for communities to find more active roles for the queen mothers who find lands and forest as 'no-go' areas due to Chiefs and landowners restrictions. This is a bigger issue for governments, House of Chiefs, District Assemblies and communities in order to achieve affirmative action.

The *District Assemblies* should develop more interest in forestry issues as they bring in revenues that bring development to its people. More efforts should be put in resources management and exploitation and not only at the receiving end of it.

FSD and OASL should court the interest, trust and collaboration of all other stakeholders at

the district level to ensure sustainable management of the resources.

Improving data collection and analysis

One key methodological observation since the analysis began is that the decentralised nature of the information gathering process makes rigorous statistical analysis of otherwise good numerical (scoring) data unreliable. If statistical analysis is desired, there is a need to streamline and harmonise the questionnaire and to consider expanding the number of communities where research was conducted. At the same time, it is important to allow for the flexibility of incorporating the differences in the levels of appreciation of operations in the forest sector among the variety of stakeholders. It is intended that the questionnaire would be harmonised for subsequent report card data collection exercise.

The formulation of some the questions would need to be changed to bring more clarity. For instance, the question *“Do you know about revenue from timber royalties?”* was interpreted in some instances to mean whether the respondents had any knowledge about royalties, while others also interpreted it to mean whether they knew of any revenue from royalties paid in their area. This ambiguity makes analysis of the results less reliable. In particular, when the questions are translated into the local language, the meaning could be lost if the question is not succinct.

Project Partners



The Centre For Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development, (CIKOD) is the partner organization implementing the project in Ghana. CIKOD is based in Accra but have sub-offices in Sunyani and Wa.

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