

A Strong Seat at the Table: Effective participation of forest-dependant communities and civil society organisations in FLEGT



Organisation: *Forest Peoples Programme*

Objectives: *Improving governance in the forest sector through effective participation of forest peoples and civil society in the FLEGT process by means of legal support and capacity-building to strengthen their ability to effectively influence legal aspects of VPA implementation and negotiation.*

Main target groups: *NGOs & Communities*

Main area of work: *Policy/legislative/regulatory frameworks (4)*

Location: *Cameroon, Congo, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia*

Main local partners: *L'Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH, Congo), Cercle pour la défense de l'environnement (CEDEN, DRC), Brainforest (Gabon), Civic Response (Ghana), Sustainable Development Institute (SDI, Liberia)*

Dates of implementation: *1 January 2011 – 31 December 2013*

Budget: *972,839 Euros*

Funding partners: *ClientEarth, Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CED) & FERN*

How useful & supportive is your project to the FLEGT process ?
In your country ? At global level ?



Overall:

- The technical *legal* element in FLEGT is significant, notably in the need for critical analysis of existing national laws/policies and the national institutional/enforcement framework, and the development of proposals for legal reform.
- This project therefore builds on previous efforts to secure a seat at the FLEGT table for communities and civil society, noting that sufficient technical and organisational capacity is a necessary condition for the *effective* participation of these stakeholders required to ensure that FLEGT achieves its governance goals

In project countries:

- This project is providing both *ongoing* legal capacity-building as well as *targeted* legal assistance to partners, including in relation to the following processes essential to successful VPA negotiation and implementation:
- In *VPA implementation countries* (Ghana, Cameroon, Congo and Liberia)
 - **Ghana** (2011 revision of the Forest & Wildlife Policy)
 - **Cameroon** (revision of the 1994 Forest Law, revising legality grid)
 - **Congo** (revision of the 2000 Forest code)
 - **Liberia** (legal advice relating to VPA content negotiations, land law reforms)
- In *VPA negotiating countries DRC and Gabon* (contributing to legality grid etc.).

What needs to be done (by you, by others) to make your contribution stronger, and to have more impact ?



Local NGOs and communities:

- Coordination of civil society and community platforms, to build unity and strength of voice, including ensuring community voices are heard directly
- Ensuring accountability and representativeness of civil society/community representatives in government-organised negotiation/implementation fora
- Constructive civil society and community relations with government and legislators

EU & VPA governments

- Active engagement of in-country EU representatives to encourage VPA governments to maintain meaningful participation of civil society and communities including: transparency of government processes; making sure the pace and quality of VPA processes does not run ahead of the creation/maintenance of functional and representative civil society/community platforms; plus, participatory government fora that guarantee effective civil society/community representation and input

International NGOs

- Coordination between INGOs to ensure synergy/avoid duplication
- Going beyond technical aspects of legal analysis and reform, to include consideration of political barriers and advocacy strategies to overcome those, including use of international human rights law tools; local NGO advocacy strategies to the EU, etc.

Joint venture: Two complementary projects



Ensuring a seat at the table for local NGOs and communities in VPA negotiation and implementation.

- opening up the space for dialogue
- creating & supporting CS coalitions
- capacity building on advocacy as well as organisational side

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- targeted legal assistance
- legal capacity building



Towards a common goal:

- meaningful, coordinated, representative participation
- effective multi-stakeholder dialogue

⇒ leading to **improved forest governance**

Increased coordination between **INGOs** (FERN, Client Earth, FPP, CED) as well as **NGO platforms** in VPA countries